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THE

ANCHOR OF THE SOUL

AND OTHER SERMONS.

By

THE LATE REV. WILLIAM ARNOT,
Author of "Laws from Heaven for Life on Earth," &c.

LONDON:
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THIS Volume consists of Sermons selected from Mr. ARNOT'S MSS. His family wish it to be stated that only one or two of them had been revised by himself for publication. The others are issued on the responsibility of friends who believe that they will be welcomed throughout the Christian Church.

December 1875.

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I.

The Anchor of the Soul.

"*Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*"—HEBREWS vi. 19.

ON the margin of the ocean that surrounds and laves our island home, an object of absorbing interest may often be observed,—a ship riding at anchor near a lee shore in an angry sea. She has drifted, ere she was aware, too near a rock-bound coast: the wind is blowing direct on shore: there is not room to tack: whether she should point her prow north or south, she will strike a projecting headland ere she can escape from the bay. One resource remains,—to anchor where she is till the wind change.

There she lies. Stand on this height and look down upon her through the drifting spray. I scarcely know in nature a more interesting or more suggestive sight. The ship is dancing on the waves: she appears to be in their power and at their mercy. Wind and water combine to make her their sport. Destruction seems near; for if the vessel's hull is dashed by these waves upon the rocks of

the coast, it will be broken into a thousand pieces. But you have stood and looked on the scene a while, and the ship still holds her own. Although at first sight she seemed the helpless plaything of the elements, they have not overcome—they have not gained upon her yet. She is no nearer destruction than when you first began to gaze in anticipation of her fate.

The ship seems to have no power to resist the onset of wind and wave. She yields to every blast and every billow. This moment she is tossed aloft on the crest of a wave, and the next she sinks heavily into the hollow. Now her prow goes down beneath an advancing breaker, and she is lost to view in the spray; but anon she emerges, like a sea-fowl shaking the water from her wings and rejoicing in the tumult. As she quivered and nodded giddily at each assault, you thought, when first you arrived in sight, that every moment would prove her last; but now that you have watched the conflict long, it begins to assume in your mind another aspect, and promise another end. These motions of the ship now, instead of appearing the sickly movements of the dying, seem to indicate the calm, confident perseverance of conscious strength and expected victory. Let winds and waves do their worst, that ship will meet them fearless, will hold her head to the blast, and maintain her place in defiance of their power.

What is the secret of that ship's safety? No other ship is in sight to which she may cling: no pillar stands within reach to which she may be moored. The bond

of her security is a line that is unseen. The ship is at anchor. The line on which she hangs does not depend on the waters, or anything that floats there; it goes through the waters, and fastens on a sure ground beyond them.

Thus, though the ship cannot escape from the wild waters, she is safe on their surface. She cannot, indeed, take the wings of a dove and fly away so as to be at rest; but the sea cannot cover her, and the wind cannot drive her on the beach. She must, indeed, bear a while the tempest's buffetings; but she is not for a moment abandoned to the tempest's will. The motto of that ship is the motto once held aloft in triumph by a tempted but heroic soul: "We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. iv. 8, 9).

An immortal creature on this changeful life is like a ship upon the ocean. On the strength of that obvious analogy the apostle intimates, by a bold yet perspicuous figure, that we have "an anchor of the soul." The soul, considered as a passenger on the treacherous sea of Time, needs an anchor; and an anchor "sure and steadfast" is provided for the needy soul.

In many respects the world, and human life on it, are like the sea. Itself restless, it cannot permit to rest any of the pilgrims that tread its heaving, shifting surface. At some times, and in some places, great tempests rise; but even in its ordinary condition it is always and everywhere uncertain, deceptive, dangerous. Currents of air

and currents of ocean intermingle with and cross each other in endless and unknown complications, bringing even the most skilful mariner to his wit's end—making him afraid either to stand still or to advance. On this heaving sea we must all lie. Even our Father in heaven does not lift up his own, and Christ the Son does not ask him so to do: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The best that can be done for them, in this world, is to preserve them from sinking or striking on the shore. The soul is tossed by many temptations; but the anchor of the soul is sure and steadfast within the veil. Without are fightings, within are fears,—all these are against us; but one thing will over-balance and overcome them—"Our life is hid with Christ in God."

Hope sometimes signifies the act of a human spirit laying hold of an unseen object, and sometimes the object unseen whereon the human spirit in its need lays hold. These two significations may be combined together: they are so combined here. "The Hope set before us," is Christ entered for us now within the veil; and the hope that "we have," is the exercise of a believing soul when it trusts in the risen Redeemer. These two cannot be separated. The one is the grasp which a believing soul takes of Christ, and the other is the Christ whom a believing soul is grasping. These two run so close together that you cannot perceive where the joining is. "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Even so, Lord; and

what human eye can tell the very line which marks where the branch ends and the vine begins? Christians are members of Christ,—of his flesh and of his bones. "As he is, so are we in this world." "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Which Hope we have." If you ask me, Whether does he mean, by hope, the Christ on whom his soul is leaning, or his own act of leaning on Christ? I answer, Both. You cannot have one of these without having both. The branch has the vine; but it has also its own living growth into the vine. And if it had not that living growth into the vine, it would not have the vine. So the soul has Christ, and also its own living faith in Christ, wanting which it would have no Christ.

Mark well here what it is that renders a disciple safe and firm as he floats on the rushing tide of Time. It is not terror of the Lord in his conscience. Such terror may awaken a slumberer, and make him flee to that which will keep him; but the terror itself cannot keep him. Fear repels; it is hope that holds;—blessed hope!

The anchor must not be cast on anything that floats on the water, however large and solid it may seem. The largest thing that floats is an iceberg. But although an iceberg does not shake like a ship, but seems to receive the waves and permit them to break on its sides as they break on the shore, it would be ruin to anchor the ship to it. The larger and the less would drift the same way, and perish together. Ah! this stately Church—this

high-seeming and high-sounding ecclesiastical organization, woe to the human spirit that is tempted in the tossing to make fast to that great imposing mass! It is not sure and steadfast. It is floating: it moves with the current of the world: it moves to an awful shore! Not there, not there! Your hope, when you stretch it out and up for eternal life, must enter "into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered."

Nor will it avail a drifting ship to fix its anchor on itself. It would be very childish to try this method; but I have seen full-grown people betake themselves with great energy to this foolish shift. When a boat on a stream broke adrift with a few unskilful people on board, I have seen them in their alarm grasp the gunwale and bend themselves and draw with all their might in the direction of the shore! In spite of their drawing, the boat glided with them down the stream. In the concerns of the soul such childishness is even more common. Faith in one's own faith or charity is a common exercise among men. Beware! Hope must go out for a hold; even as the ship's anchor must be flung away from the ship. The eye is made for looking with, not for looking at. Away from all in ourselves, and out through all that floats like ourselves on this shifting sea, we must throw the anchor of the soul through the shifting waters into Him who holds them in the hollow of his hand.

Mark, further, that hope in Christ is specifically the anchor of the *soul*. Here, like draws to like: spirit to spirit. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him wor-

ship him in spirit. There is no anchor that will make our temporal possessions fast. Wealth, and friends, and even life, may drift away any day on the flood; and no power on earth can arrest the movement. These bodily things may or may not abide with a Christian; but his anchor does not hold them. It is only an anchor of the soul, not an anchor of the body. We must not expect from the Lord what he never promised.

There are contrivances not a few in our day for fixing material property, so that it shall not drift away in the currents of time. The system of assurances both on life and property has reached an enormous magnitude. Amidst its great and manifold branches, the wicked have of late years, like wild beasts in a forest, found cover for various crimes. Things are now made fast which our forefathers thought essentially uncertain, like the currents of the ocean. Treasures are insured while they cross the sea in ships, so that, though the vessel go to the bottom, the importer gets his own. The food and clothing of a wife and children, which formerly were left to float on the uncertain waters of the husband and father's life, are made fast by insurance to an anchor which holds them, although that life should glide away. Taking up the obvious analogy employed in this scripture, one of the insurance societies has adopted the anchor as its name.

But the action of these anchors is limited to things seen and temporal. They cannot be constructed so as to catch and keep any spiritual thing. They may hold

fast a wife's fortune, when the life of the bread-winner falls in; but they cannot maintain joy in her heart, or kindle light in her eye. Far less can they insure against the shipwreck of the soul. With these things they do not intermeddle. All the world may be gained for a man, and kept for him too, and yet he is a loser, if he lose his own soul. Only one anchor can grasp and hold the better part of man—and that is the hope which enters into the heavens, and fastens there in Jesus.

The anchor—in as far as it indicates the object which hope grasps—the anchor is "sure and steadfast." The expressions are exact and full. The words are tried words. They are given in order that we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us.

There are two cases in which one's hope may be disappointed: the support you lean on may be *unwilling* or *unable* to sustain you. In the one case it is deception; in the other, weakness. A Christian's hope is not exposed to either flaw: it is both "sure and steadfast;" that is, the Redeemer, who holds them, is *willing* and *able*. He will not falsely let you go, nor feebly faint beneath your weight. He is *true* and *strong*—for these are the words. He both *will* and *can* keep that which we commit to him against that day.

With the same meaning, but by means of another analogy, Christ is represented elsewhere in Scripture as a foundation; and it is intimated that the foundation is a

tried one. It has been put to the strain, and has stood the test.

In modern practice great importance attaches to the trying of an anchor. Many ships have been lost through accident or fraud in the manufacture. The instrument had a good appearance, but there was a flaw in its heart; and when the strain came, it snapped, and all was lost. For the security of the subject, the Government have erected an apparatus for testing anchors; and the royal seal is stamped on those that have been approved. When the merchantman purchases an anchor so certified, he has confidence that it will not fail him in his need. It is interesting, and even solemn work, to test anchors, and stamp them as approved. Beware! set not the seal on one that is doubtful, for many precious lives will yet be intrusted to its keeping.

He who is now the anchor of the soul within the veil, was "made perfect through suffering."

The safety of which this text speaks, is safety such as an anchor affords. This is different from the safety of a ship on a stormless sea, and different from the safety of a ship that is moored fore and aft within the walls of a harbour. Both these positions are safe; but they differ both from each other and from safety by an anchor. Man unfallen enjoyed the first kind of safety, and the ransomed in rest enjoy the second; but the place of a believer in the body is neither like that of a ship on a calm sea, nor like that of a ship within the harbour,—it is like a ship exposed to raging winds above, and deceit-

ful currents below. Such a soul may be abundantly safe; but its safety is of the kind that a ship enjoys while it is exposed to the storms, and before it reaches the haven—the safety that an exposed ship enjoys through an anchor that is sure and steadfast.

Take now a series of practical lessons.

1. The ship that is kept by an anchor, *although safe, is not at ease.* It does not, on the one hand, dread destruction; but neither, on the other hand, does it enjoy rest. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." Those who have entered the harbour do not need an anchor; and those who are drifting with the stream do not cast one out. The hope which holds is neither for the world without nor the glorified within, but for Christ's people as they pass through life—rejoicing with trembling; faint, yet pursuing. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

2. But further: the ship that is held by an anchor is not only tossed in the tempest like other ships,—*it is tossed more than other ships.* The ship that rides at anchor experiences rackings and heavings that ships which drift with the tide do not know. So, souls who have no hold of Christ seem to lie softer on the surface of a heaving world than souls that are anchored on his power and love. The drifting ship, before she strikes, is more smooth and more comfortable than the anchored one; but when she strikes, the smoothness is all over. The pleasures of sin are sweet to those who taste them;

but the sweetness is only for a season. "The wicked shall be driven away in his iniquity; but the righteous hath hope in his death."

3. When the anchor has been cast into a good ground, *the heavier the strain that comes on it, the deeper and firmer grows its hold.* As winds and currents increase in violence, the anchor bites more deeply into the solid, and so increases its preserving power. It is thus with a trusting soul: temptations, instead of driving him away from his Saviour, only fix his affections firmer on the Rock of Ages. "When I am weak, then am I strong;" when I am most exposed, then am I safest, in the hollow of my Redeemer's hand. If you have hold, it is in a time of temptation that you will increase the intensity of your grasp. Accordingly you find, as a general rule, that those Christians who have passed through a great fight of afflictions are stronger in the faith than others who have always sailed on a smooth sea.

4. The ship that is anchored is sensitive to every change of wind or tide, and *ever turns sharply round to meet and resist the stream*, from what direction soever it may flow. A ship is safest with her head to the sea and the tempest. In great storms the safety of all often depends on the skill with which the sailors can keep her head to the rolling breakers. Life and death have sometimes hung for a day and a night in the balance, whether the weary steersman could keep her head to the storm until the storm should cease. Even a single wave allowed to strike her on the broadside might send all to the bottom.

But to keep the ship in the attitude of safety, there is no effort and no art equal to the anchor. As soon as the anchor feels the ground, the vessel that had been drifting broadside, is brought up, and turns to the waves a sharp prow that cleaves them in two and sends them harmless along the sides.

Watch from a height any group of ships that may be lying in an open roadstead. At night when you retire they all point westward; in the morning, they are all looking to the east. Each ship has infallibly felt the first veering of the wind or water, and instantly veered in the requisite direction, so that neither wind nor wave has ever been able to strike her on the broadside. Thereby hangs the safety of the ship.

Ships not at anchor do not turn and face the foe. The ship that is left loose will be caught by a gust on her side, and easily thrown over.

As with ships, so with souls: those that are anchored feel sensitively the direction and strength of the temptation, and instantly turn to meet and to overcome it; whereas those that are not anchored are suddenly overcome, and their iniquities, like the wind, carry them away. "We are saved by hope;"—saved not only from being outcast in the end, but from yielding to temptation now.

It is a vain imagination that rises in ignorant minds against the gospel of Christ, that when a sinner gets a glad hope in Christ's mercy, he will not be careful to obey Christ's law. It is an old objection, and perhaps it

is human and natural; but it is not real—it is not true. As certainly as the anchored ship feels every gust and every current, and turns sharply round to face and fight it; so certainly a soul that has hope in Christ has a quick and sure instinct to detect influences and companionships and customs that dishonour the Lord and ensnare his people. And as the hopeful soul surely detects the danger, it also, in virtue of its hold and hope, turns round to meet, to resist, and to make the devil flee.

I suppose no youth, since Pharaoh reigned in Egypt, has been exposed to a greater strain of temptation than that which Joseph overcame in Potiphar's house. But it was hope that saved him, as the anchor saves the ship. If he had not been at peace with God, he would have been like a ship caught on the broadside by a hurricane. It was the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast within the veil before the blast began, that enabled him to overcome it: "How can I do this great evil, *and sin against God?*"

5. When the ship is anchored, and the sea is running high, there is great commotion at her bows. The waves in rapid succession come on and strike. When they strike they are broken, and leap, white and angry, high up on the vessel's sides. This tumult is by no means agreeable in itself; but the mariner on board would not like to want it, for it is the sign of safety. If, while wind and waves continue to rage, he should observe that this commotion had suddenly ceased, he would not rejoice.

He would look eagerly over the bulwarks, and seeing the water blue on her bows, instead of the hissing, roaring spray, he would utter a scream of terror. The smoothness at her bows indicates to him that her anchor is dragging. The ship is drifting with wind and water to the shore.

Such, too, is the experience of a soul. Brother, you hope in Christ. Do not be surprised that the currents of fashion rub sometimes rudely against you. It is explained by a text in the Bible: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." If you are fixed, a great flood is rushing by, and it must needs cause a commotion round you. An impetuous tide of worldliness will dash disagreeably against you from time to time. Do not be too anxious to make all smooth. Peace may be bought too dear. When the mighty stream of vanity on which you float produces no ruffling at the point of contact,—when it is not disagreeable to you, and you not disagreeable to it,—suspect that your anchor is dragging, that it has lost its hold, and that you are drifting into danger.

Cast in the anchor while the sea is calm: you will need it to lean on when the last strain comes on!

II.

"He Stood and Cried."

"*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*"—JOHN vii. 37.

THIS was the feast of booths or tabernacles. It was instituted expressly to commemorate the journey from Egypt to Canaan (Lev. xxiii. 33–43). Once every year, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the ransomed people in their own good land cut down branches from the trees, therewith constructed tents on the flat roofs of their houses, or in the open squares of the city, and dwelt night and day for a week under the fragile covering. It was by such institutions as this that the history of the Exodus was printed into the nation's life for all generations. The pilgrimage of forty years between the Red Sea and the Jordan became the mould in which the habit of their thought was cast; their psalms and their prophecies were shapen in it. The language of Canaan was dipped in the bitter experiences of Egypt, and the free enjoyed more keenly their liberty by being continually reminded of their

bondage. On the same principle, a more numerous seed of Abraham in a brighter land of promise will call to mind the struggles of the pilgrimage, in order to enhance the sweetness of eternal rest.

In the latter days of Jerusalem, as we learn from the history of the period, a ceremony was added to those of the ordained feast of booths, intended, evidently, to commemorate the thirst in the wilderness, and the supply that was provided from the rock in Horeb. On the last day of the feast, towards evening, the priests formed a procession, and having drawn water from the Pool of Siloam, bore it to the Temple, and poured it on the ground, so that it should flow down to the lower streets of the city. This symbol pointed, probably, to Ezekiel's grand vision of waters issuing from the Temple, small at first, but rapidly increasing, until they became a river that could not be passed over—a river to swim in.

Ezekiel's vision must have been an object of passionate interest to the seed of Abraham in Palestine in our Lord's day. The condition of the people was wretched. They groaned under a foreign yoke. In vain they looked for a deliverer; the heavens over their head remained as brass, and the earth under their feet as iron. There were, in a sense, thirsty souls, but there was no cold water to refresh them. These unhappy Jews, chafing in the chains of the oppressor, would listen to the gushing waters of Ezekiel's prophecy, as often as the passage occurred in the daily reading of the synagogue, with an intense and indescribable longing. With more or less

of intelligent faith, they agonized for a time when forth from the Temple at Jerusalem a stream of blessing should flow to refresh the weary land. I think they would pore over the prophet's pictured page until they saw the river in their dreams, and were awaked by the tumult of imaginary joy, to discover that their souls were still empty.

The longing of the people's hearts, it seems, found outlet in the introduction of a new symbol, superadded to the ordained feast, but apparently in harmony with its main design, and suited to the emergency of the time. Besides a material enacting of the dwelling in tents, they instituted a material representation of the stream that flowed from the rock, quenching the bodily thirst at the time, and promising better things in Christ.

The procession of priests has gone to Siloam and returned to the Temple. They have poured the water from the golden vessel, and a rivulet is making its way along the unwonted channel, forth from the hallowed courts towards the city. The assembled crowds are ranged on either side, watching the progress of the mimic stream. The beams of the setting sun strike the water, where in a hollow it spreads into a pool, and golden glory flashes for a moment from the spot that had been dull dry earth before. The multitude gaze in ignorant superstition; but some of the Lord's hidden ones are there, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and spelling painfully out of these dead letters the name of their living Redeemer.

Jesus was there teaching. He had come up about the middle of the feast, and now its last day was nearly done. He looked on the crowd as they gazed wistfully on the symbolic water. His heart was yearning for them. He knew what was in man: he knew that the Jews made idols of these significant signs, as they made idols of the scriptures which were printed on their clothing. He saw them drinking that which cannot quench the thirst of a soul. He pitied them, and came to the rescue.

You have seen a group of bare-footed, ragged, hungry children, standing on the pavement on a cold winter night, gazing through the glass of a baker's window—gazing on the bread, which they greatly needed, but could not reach. You pitied them; perhaps you paused, and gave the needy little ones some of the bread for which they longed; you remembered, as you resumed your journey, the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Such to the Lord seemed those groups of Jews who crowded forward to see the water flowing that evening in the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem. He saw them straining after a consolation, which, although it was near them, they could not reach. The waters were indeed a symbol of spiritual life in the Lord; but the Jews could not penetrate the glass which at once veiled and revealed the salvation of Christ. They were like the visitors who stood and looked into the empty grave of Jesus. He is not there; he is risen. Why seek ye the living among

the dead? This is man's extremity and God's opportunity. He approaches them; he speaks to them; he turns their straining eyes away from the husks which once held the wheat, but which are empty now. He bids them turn away from that trickling symbolic water to himself, the Saviour from sin. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Consider the invitation,—

I. In its substance: "Any one, come unto me."

II. In its specific form: "If any one thirst, let him drink."

III. In its peculiar earnestness: "In the *last, great* day of the feast, Jesus *stood* and *cried*, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

I. *The invitation in its substance:* "Any one, come unto me."

1. What the offer is: "Come unto me."

2. To whom the offer is made: "Any one."

1. *What the offer is:* "Come unto me."—It is here that a minister meets his greatest difficulty, and discovers his own helplessness. God's greatest things are the simplest, and the simplest things it is most difficult to explain. As long as our course lies along the outskirts, and among the accessories of the faith, our expositions may be intelligible, interesting, and instructive; but when we approach the heart of our theme, we are liable to be made dumb if we perceive its greatness, or to

speak foolishly if we don't. Scarcely any form of words is more familiar in this Christian community than "Come to Jesus," and cognate expressions gathered directly from the Bible or bursting out from believing hearts; yet scarcely any form of words passes more frequently by, like a ship in the sea or a bird in the air, without leaving a track behind.

The way to be saved is to come to the Saviour. He does not destroy our enemies, and permit us to remain at a distance from himself. We cannot be saved by him unless we are saved in him. He desires to get the company of saved men; and if men hope to be saved by his mercy, and yet keep out of his sight, they have missed the meaning of his work. If, with no relish for his presence, you keep company with your vanities, and cry to an Almighty Christ to open for you the gates of heaven, that in the last extremity you may escape from hell, you have no part in his salvation. The answer prepared for you is, "Depart from me; I know you not." Those who do not want to have Christ's society on earth will not get it in heaven. His invitation, "Come unto me," implies that we part from all that displeases him, and walk with him in newness of life. The true disciples, when the Lord manifests himself, are ready at all times, and especially when darkness approaches, to constrain him to abide. While he walks with them, their hearts burn: when they miss him from their company, their hearts are sad. His promise is a double one: Lo, I am for you at the judgment-seat; and lo, I am

with you in the present pilgrimage. This Christ cannot be divided: if we do not accept all, we get none. He will not be for us in that day, if we do not take him with us in this.

"Come unto *me*." It is to Christ himself, and not to any servant or substitute. You may come to the church, to the Lord's table, to the Bible, and get no good. Past all these attendants a needy soul must come, saying, as the spouse to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Christ's work for sinners is not the fulfilment of a contract in which mere omnipotence is put forth. It is not to lift the dead weight of the fallen stars and set them in their place again; it is an engagement between person and person; it is a work in which love enters as the controlling element. In the redemption of sinners love is first and last, the beginning and the end. His work is not to lift a weight; it is to win an alienated heart. He loves; and love is hurt when it is not loved again. The saying has become memorable, "The Bible is the religion of Protestants." It might be carried a step further, and so made to express a deeper truth,—Christ is the religion of Christians. The true Christian is the man who makes Christ his friend, who speaks to him when he lies down at night and when he awakes in the morning; who cleaves personally to the man Christ Jesus, God with us, as his company to-day and his Redeemer at last.

2. *To whom the invitation is addressed:* "Any one."—The gospel is as free as the air or the sunshine. To you,

O men, the voice of Wisdom calls: "Whosoever will, let him come." Search this Bible through: you will find many of the worst accepted; but you will not find a single example of one rejected for want of some necessary quality in himself. The little children, people in the busy, burning noon of life, and those who have grown old in their sins,—all are welcome. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. If you have gotten much of this world, and have made its thick clay the portion of your soul, yet come to Jesus and you are welcome; he upbraideth not. If you have failed to win the wealth for which you laboured, and with wearied, soured spirit, quarrelled with God and men on account of your misfortunes, yet come, and you are welcome to Christ. Let the self-righteous leave his pride behind, and cast his filthy rags away,—the fine linen, clean and white, the righteousness of the saints, is ready to adorn him with. Let the intemperate turn his back on his tempter and come to Jesus: he will in no wise be cast out. The society of the redeemed in glory will be in one sense very various, and in another sense one homogeneous company. They have come from various kinds and degrees of impurity; but they have all washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

II. *Consider the invitation now in its specific form*—Let the thirsty drink: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

The spring has been opened, and it is flowing freely.

The whole world may get life there as well as one man. All the fulness of the Godhead bodily is treasured up in Christ. On one side all things are now ready. Here is the water of life, but where are the thirsty souls?

I saw lately a letter written by a young invalid, who had been sent to Madeira to escape the rigour of a Scottish winter. It glowed all over with the praises of the place: the climate, the landscape, the lodging, the friends, the food,—all were of the best. Even in the matter of health there was neither sickness nor pain. But one plaint, not loud but long, ran through the letter like its woof;—the key-note of its melancholy cadence was, "I have no appetite. If the appetite should return, I would be well." The next mail brought intelligence that she was dead and buried. In the midst of plenty, she died of want,—a want not of food, but of hunger.

This is the ailment of which many souls are dying in the city and the land to-day. Wells of salvation are flowing, and overflowing, and flooding the land. The proclamation everywhere resounds, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Yet many perish,—perish for want of thirst.

I know not any pleasure of sense more exquisite than a draught of cool, clear water, when you are thirsty; but few things are more insipid than water when there is no thirst. It is thus that Christ and his salvation are very sweet to one, and very tasteless to another.

When the law of God comes in with authority upon a guilty conscience,—when the terrors of the Lord con-

sume a soul, as the burning sun dries up the herbage in a rainless season,—then the convinced sinner understands what is meant by "the water of life." The good news of mercy to the guilty through the sacrifice of Christ is as cold waters to this thirsty soul. When sin is gnawing at your heart like the living worm, and the judgment-seat is frowning before you like a burning fire, and the dark grave, like the bottomless pit, is opening to receive you,—oh then Christ is welcome,—his gospel is sweet to your taste.

But to the whole-hearted these are unmeaning words. The form of doctrine to which they have been accustomed they do not indeed reject, but to them it has no meaning. They have never been thirsty, and therefore for cold water they do not care. Those who do their religion as a painful duty, or bear it as a burden which it is not safe to cast away, die strangers alike to the pain and the pleasure of God's children. They know neither the craving of thirst, nor the delight of getting that craving satisfied.

Here a fellow-creature is helpless. None of us could make a drop of water, although it were to save a brother's life. But our impotence on that side is not a misfortune, for God has provided for his world an abundant supply. On the other hand, although crystal streams were flowing through every valley, and pearly drops descending from the skies on every field, we could not create thirst in any living creature, if it were not implanted there by the finger of God. In point of fact, except in a few

morbid examples, the creatures are on both sides very good. Water in abundance is provided for every living creature, and every living creature is stimulated by thirst to take as much as it needs. On neither side could we repair the machinery, if it were defective; but the machinery on both sides is perfect, and needs no help from our hand.

In the spiritual department we are equally helpless. We could not provide the supply,—the life from the dead to sinners. But God has provided this supply—in all fulness he has treasured it in Christ. But neither can we kindle in a soul the desire which will accept the mercy provided through Christ. He who in nature provided the water, generates also in the creature the necessary thirst; and He who in the gift of his Son has provided the living water, must generate also in the soul the thirst.

It is not enough to say that we cannot make thirst where it is not; we cannot even explain what it is. If this body of brothers to whom I now speak had never experienced thirst, I could not, though I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, convey to you a true conception of what thirst is. But if you should afterwards be thirsty, I might save myself the trouble of defining what it means. You know it without a word from me. It is precisely the same in the spiritual department. Neither I nor any other minister can rightly show what it is to long for God's salvation, to those who have never experienced that desire. "Blessed are they

that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

III. *The manner of invitation—the peculiar earnestness with which it is given.*

"*In the feast.*"—The solemnities instituted of old in Israel all pointed to gospel privileges. The feast is now; and while it lasts the word of Jesus falls on our ear,—the word, "Come unto me."

"*In the last day, that great day of the feast.*"—Great because it was last. There were seven days of it; but now the seventh was nearly done. While this day now running its course is in its own nature neither greater nor less than other days, it is to some of the world's inhabitants greater than all other days of their life together. If one has lived twenty, or thirty, or fifty years, and is still a stranger to Christ when this day dawns; if, moreover, this should be the last of his allotted number,—then this day is to him a great day. It is greater than a whole eternity to him; for on it he is either saved or lost.

"*Jesus stood.*"—He remained on the spot. He did not go away, wearied with waiting, or provoked by the people's neglect. When the foolish virgins returned from their search he was gone, and they were shut out. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He is bending over you, like the sun in the heavens; so that if the blind eyes open now they will look on the Light of Life. Some of us may have been much surprised to find him waiting when we

were at last made willing. Young man, he knocked at your door in your early youth; but you left him without, and kept your vanities as more congenial company. At another knock you ventured to speak to the Lord, and promised to arise and admit him; but you fell in with other company ere your good resolution was executed, and Christ was again neglected. When at last some providence shook your foundations, and rent your coverings away, you thought that now, in your need, Christ would have none of you. You were surprised at the long-suffering of God our Saviour. When at last, deserted by all others whom you had preferred, you thought of turning to the Son of God, you found him still waiting; and he upbraided not. "His is love beyond a brother's; oh, how he loves!"

"*He stood up.*"—He took a prominent position, that all might see him. So to-day, in our land, he is lifted up. Our eyes behold our Teacher.

"*He cried.*"—This is strange. This is the world's way turned upside down. We are accustomed to hear those crying who are ready to perish, while those who go out to save are calm and silent. Here this method is reversed. The lost whom he saves are silent and satisfied; the Saviour, who brings deliverance, cries. They act as if they were full, and he as if he were needy. He cried; why? All things are his in heaven and on earth; what want is gnawing at the heart of him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead bodily lies? Ah! it is the longing of his soul not to get, but to give redemption.

He has a more eager desire to give pardon than any awakened sinner has to get it. It was he that said, out of his own experience, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

When the men of Jerusalem were buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, this Jesus stood on the mountain's brow and wept over them. They who needed salvation had dry eyes; he who longed to give salvation wept, because they were perishing in sin. It is so to-day. He is the same Jesus; and human hearts are still deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

How is it with you, friends? I find that this aspect of Jesus is very winsome to my poor, fearing, doubting heart. While I think only that I need him—while I look within, and discover all evil—when I look forward, and find the prospect shut in by the judgment-seat—when I am oppressed by the thought of my sin and wretchedness—when I throw out all my line to sound the depths of my own need, and feel no bottom,—I am apt to dread that Christ may not welcome such a one. I may be told, indeed, and told truly, that he will not cast out this empty, needy, worthless thing. Still, I find it hard to believe. It is like bidding me, while I stand on the earth, fling a line first fastened to my waist, fling it upward into yonder blue far heaven. I throw at it with all my might, but it falls down again by its own weight at my feet; it will not go up—it will not for me go up all the way and hold. But after knowing that I need the

Saviour, when I discover also that he needs me—that he wants me—that he longs to make me like himself, and take me to his presence; when I know that he longs to give salvation more than I long to get it—when not only I cry to him, but when he cries to get me—oh! then it seems easier to believe. Then, it is not I that by the vigour of my own arm must throw a line into heaven; but the line, fastened to the throne of God, drops down from heaven to me. I have but to grasp it, and I am saved.

> "And from above the Lord sent down,
> And took me from below;
> From many waters he me drew,
> Which would me overflow." (Ps. xviii. 16.)

It is not, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down; but the word is nigh thee—his own word. He *cried*, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

III.

"He shall Glorify Me."

"*He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*"—JOHN xvi. 14.

THERE is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. He is the way. No man cometh unto the Father but by him.

Whoever and whatever he may be whom we may meet as we cross this desert, our message to him must be in substance the same as Philip's to the Ethiopian. We must preach unto him Jesus. Neither is there salvation in any other. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But in preaching Christ, we should not neglect the ministry of the Spirit. To preach Christ without reference to his Spirit, is to put ourselves in that Spirit's place. He made much of the Spirit's work in the establishment of his kingdom: so should we. He ascended into heaven that he might bestow the Spirit, and counted that gift an equivalent to his sorrowing disciples for the

want of his own presence at their head. It is from his own lips that we learn the necessity, the use, and the results of the Holy Spirit's ministry.

The work of God the Spirit is an essential part of the eternal covenant. Wanting it, there would be no salvation to men, no glory to God in the gospel. Although the Redeemer had travailed on earth, he would not in heaven have seen of the travail of his soul, if the Spirit had not taken of his and shown it effectually to men.

The sacrifice of Christ for sinners does not of itself save sinners,—not from any defect in the Redeemer's work, but because he is rejected and despised of men. Jesus said, "It is finished," when he bowed his head and died. No new sacrifice is needed. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. But after that sacrifice has been offered, many perish. This shows that, in some sense, the sacrifice of Christ is not by itself enough to save a sinning world. Nothing more is needed to reconcile God to sinners; but something more is needed to reconcile sinners to God. On the upper side, the simple presentation of Christ is enough: on the under side, the simple presentation of Christ is not enough. God the Father does not, when the Son presents himself, demand another mediator to induce him to listen to that Son's voice; but fallen men need, and get, another Intercessor to open their hearts to a beseeching Saviour.

On the one extreme is God, the offended Judge: on the other, fallen, prodigal men, with Christ, the Daysman, laying his hand on both. But although all is thus

ready, no transaction takes place. God needs no ministry to make him willing to be, in Christ, reconciled to us; but we need a ministry, even after Christ's work is complete, to make us willing to be, through Christ, reconciled to God.

It is of the essence of the covenant, that those who by man's sin were reciprocally alienated, should both accept Christ as Mediator, and be in him reconciled. But one feature or effect of the alienation is, that we are unwilling to accept the redemption which we so much need. The spiritually blind, looking outward, cannot perceive the beauty of the Saviour; looking inward, cannot appreciate their own guilt and need. The perverse heart spurns away the Saviour; and thus, though Christ is an all-sufficient Redeemer, men are perishing in their sins. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The power of God is needed, and in the covenant is, in point of fact, applied, to bend the hard heart into glad compliance with Christ's offer; and the ministry of the Spirit is the form in which divine power is exercised for this end.

As we have an Intercessor with God, God has an Intercessor with us. The Son, in heaven, pleads with God for us: the Spirit, on earth, pleads with us for God.

The Spirit's ministry is exercised on earth among men. In heaven it is not needed. But we must carefully observe, that the Spirit is not another Saviour, sent to accomplish the object in which the Son had failed. It is of essential importance to mark the connection

which, according to the Scriptures, subsists between the sacrifice of the Son and the ministry of the Spirit. When we say that men in enmity against God perish in their sin, notwithstanding the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, unless the quickening Spirit intervene, we must beware of supposing that the Spirit accomplished what the blood of Christ failed to achieve. When the enmity is removed, and the will subdued, through the Spirit's ministry, it still remains true that Christ crucified, presented to the sinner, was the true power that melted and subdued him.

Leaving out of view, for the present, the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, when presented to the Father, in removing condemnation and obtaining favour for the unworthy, we must trace the operation and effects of that sacrifice on the other side, in removing the enmity of a human heart, so that it is reconciled to God. It is a great error, on the one side, to imagine, that the presentation of Christ in the Scriptures, or by a human ministry, is of itself sufficient to convert men; but it is an equal, though an opposite error, to suppose that when the blood of Christ failed to move the man's heart, another power—the power of the Spirit—prevailed to move it. When we point out that the simple exhibition of redeeming love, in the life and death of Jesus, is not enough to change a sinner's heart, we do not in aught detract from the power of that love. We do not represent its drawing power to be small; we represent the resisting hardness of a carnal mind to be great.

Some teachers, erring not in the positive doctrines which they proclaim, but in a certain one-sidedness, which omits the opposite and corresponding and balancing truths, are in the habit of expatiating on the divine omnipotence of the love that radiates from Christ crucified, and intimating that it needs but to be held forth in simplicity in order to win the world to God. But you are met here by the obvious fact that many to whom Christ is so presented continue in unbelief, and perish in their sin. Another ministry intervenes here, not incongruous with Christ's work, but provided, promised, given by Christ to reveal and apply his own love. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." In point of fact, to teach that the exhibition of Christ's love is the only power needed, and the only power applied to convert sinners, does not make the power of Christ's love greater, but the evil of human hearts less. If the heart of man were not deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, the lifting of Christ upon the cross would draw all men to him. When Jesus—divine love incarnate!—went out and in among men, they condemned and crucified him. This is the peculiar condemnation of the world, that when the Son of God came to seek and save it, they would have none of him. After the descent of the Spirit, in

the Pentecost, thousands of these despisers were converted in a day.

But do we not learn from the Scriptures that the love of Christ is the greatest power that can be brought to bear on a sinful heart—that Christ crucified is in this respect the very power of God? Yes; we learn all this, and more in the same direction. This is the greatest power—this the only power—this the power to which the prodigal yields, when at last he consents to return to the Father. As there is none other whose merit will take away condemnation in God's sight, so there is none other whose manifested love can avail to overcome the enmity in man, and draw him back to God. But here we must insert the Spirit's ministry as a part of the counsel of God. Besides the objective inducement, there must be the subjective operation. I agree with the teachers who magnify the power and sufficiency of the Saviour's love to subdue and win the world to himself. I allow them to state it in the strongest terms, and to state it fully. When they have done, I take up the subject where they have left off, and teach further, that such is the hardness, the blindness, the death in sin in which mankind lie, that they remain unmoved even under this wonderful love: moreover, such is the long-suffering and patience of our God, that instead of giving men over when they refuse to submit to the Son, he sends through that Son the ministering Spirit, whose work it is to overcome the enmity, not without, but by means of the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ. God

in the covenant, after providing Christ's love to draw men, has also provided a mighty work in secret on sinners' hearts to make them yield to that drawing.

When the Spirit works effectually on a human heart, it is not a work independent of Christ's; the Spirit's office is to apply Christ's work: "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Ask those who have, through the outpouring of the Spirit in pentecostal seasons, been renewed and forgiven—ask them to what they owe forgiveness and sanctifying: they will give the old answer — Christ is all my salvation. Christ crucified has removed condemnation, so that God is at peace with me; and melted out the enmity of my heart, so that I am at peace with God. The Spirit does not act without the motive, or supply another; but he applies the motive which lies in redeeming love, and makes the heart yield to its power.

When saved men enter rest, the glory of their redemption will all rise to God. They throw their crowns at the Redeemer's feet. They abjure all claim to the merit of providing mercy, and all claim to the merit of even accepting the mercy that was provided. They could not save themselves, and they could not come to the Saviour. Even when redemption was wrought by Christ, such was their deadness that they would have perished in presence of a complete salvation, had not the sovereign Spirit graciously come, and by a secret work in their hearts made them willing to close with Christ—made Christ so lovely that they were at length won.

As we cleave on the one hand to Christ's work for us, we must cleave on the other hand to the Spirit's work within us. To reconcile God to us, removing the condemnation, is the part of the Son; to reconcile us to God, removing the enmity, is the ministry of the Spirit.

It is a mistake to limit the ministration of the Spirit to the revelation of Christ in the Scriptures: this is the Spirit's work, but this is not all his work. In as far as that revelation is concerned, the Spirit's work, like Christ's, is finished. But as our Intercessor with the Father carries on that part of his ministry to the end, so the Father's Intercessor with us carries on that part of his ministry to the end.

The work now concerns not the *object*, but the *organ*: the defect now is not a dim light in the sky, but a blind eye on earth. I do not need the Spirit to display for me a brighter light, but I need the Spirit within me to open the eyes of my understanding. I do not need another ministry to bring from heaven another and greater love than Christ's; but I need another ministry to break and open this hard heart, that the love already pressing on its gates may be permitted to flow in, that it may reconcile and purify me. I do not need any ministry to make Jesus more lovely; but I do need a ministry to make me love Jesus.

At this point men have struggled hard to rid themselves of the humbling doctrine that they are as little able to accept the reconciliation offered, as to provide the reconciliation for themselves. It is as completely

beyond human power to open a blind eye as to hang a sun in the heavens. From the Father of lights both good gifts alike come down. Both the Christ who is the way, and the Spirit who leads us through it, are the sovereign gifts of God. It is from the region of human philosophy, not from the Scriptures, that objections are gathered. People raise a debate on the question how man can be responsible, if God is sole and sovereign on both sides of salvation. I am not able to explain all these points to the satisfaction of all men: many of God's works are too deep for me, both in creation and redemption. I shall not fling away the gift, whether it be material or spiritual, because I cannot by my searching find out the Giver. If I do not believe in his Son, it is not less but more my own fault, seeing he has promised the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

I confess I have learned to love the divine sovereignty. I am not ashamed of it: I do not explain it away; I delight to own that I am indebted to sovereign free mercy both for a Christ to believe in, and for my believing in Christ. The Object to look upon, and the look upon that Object, are both the gift of God.

Conspiracies have at various times sprung up in the world to deprive the Supreme of this peculiar glory—to deny him a will. Man would fain substitute a law of Nature for the living God. They conceive of an unthinking principle like gravitation; they think of a power like the sea, lashing itself, and raging, and advancing without a purpose or a plan, floating a ship and sinking

a stone with equal indifference, and continuing afterwards its unmeaning roar. I love the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: it is a sublime protest against an atheistic human philosophy, and a transparent assertion of the doctrine that the potter hath power over the clay, and puts it forth too.

I can have no communion with a merely mechanical omnipotence,—a sort of infinite ocean that heaves eternally by laws to which it is subject; saving me if I continue to make myself sufficiently buoyant before I am cast on its cold, uncaring bosom; and swallowing me up with the same relentless regularity if I make the leap before I be light enough. This omnipotent principle is not my Saviour. If I thought he should crush me, I would hate him; and if I were saved, I would not thank him,—would not love him. I need as my Saviour the living God, who loves me, and whom I may love in return;—the God who looked on me when I was lost, and loved me when I was worthless; who saved me from hell, and made me his child. I need from my God, not merely a general aspect of benevolence towards the world, under which some of the most vigorous agonizers may struggle into heaven; I need not only permission to save myself, but a hope that the Infinite sees me, knows me, pities me, loves me, grasps me, and holds me in the hollow of his hand, safe against all dangers, until he bring me to his eternal rest. My God is he who, after giving Christ for my redemption, gives the Spirit to quicken me and unite me to Christ. If there were a

true vine growing in the ground beside me, and I were a branch severed, rootless, fruitless, ready to die, and sure when dead to be burned, what would the living vine be to me, unless a kind and skilful hand should graff me in and give me life? The gospel is nothing to me unless I am permitted to attribute a will to my God; unless I am indebted to that free will for all my salvation first and last,—for the pardon-price and for the renewing power.

Do not tell me of a God who stands in high heaven, with its gates open, permitting all to arise and enter who will or can: tell me, as the Bible does, of a God who not only receives me if I am willing of my own accord, but who comes by his Spirit into my heart while it is unwilling, and makes it willing by his power. A Saviour who stands in heaven pledged to receive me after I can say, "Lord, I believe," is not enough for me: I need a Saviour who will rend the heavens and come down when I cry from the depths, "Lord, help my unbelief."

It is necessary that we should take now one side into view and now another, in an effort rightly to divide the word of truth; but both sides lie in the Scriptures. Jesus, revealing the Father, gave the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Prodigal. The lost sheep is sought, found, and carried home; yet the prodigal comes to himself, arises, and goes of his own will and on his own feet to the Father. As the Saviour's work for sinners does not supersede the sinner's duty to follow Christ, so the Spirit's work in sinners does not supersede

repentance and believing in the sinner himself. It is the Spirit that quickens the dead; and yet the command of the Scriptures is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"

If any should neglect to obey the command, on the alleged ground that if the Spirit sovereignly quicken him he will live, and if the Spirit is withheld he will remain unconverted, whatever exertions he may make,—he is allowing a philosophical speculation to interpose between his soul and his Saviour. The difficulty does not lie in the domain of religion at all; it is a subtle speculation of a human brain permitted to rise up like a mist and spread until it has darkened both heaven and earth. The matter is set down with abundant plainness in the Scriptures. Not only work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *although* it is God that worketh in you; but work out your own salvation, *for* it is God that worketh in you. The promise of the Spirit to enlighten and enliven, so far from being intended to hinder, is meant to help your own effort to turn and live.

Here are two great rocks, at some distance from each other, rising from the sea. On this one you may safely stand, and on that one you may safely stand. You believe that though the two are separated above the water, and stand far apart, they are united in their roots far beneath. You have no difficulty in taking your stand alternately on both, and in believing that they are united in unseen depths; but if you should attempt personally to trace the one rock to the other,—to feel with your

hands beneath the water all the way over from this to that,—you would be lost in those waters that cover and conceal their union. It is thus that faith accepts both the truths revealed,—the sovereign act of God when he breathes new life into the dead, and the freedom of a human being when the alternative "Repent or perish" is placed before him. Do your part *although* God does his: do yours hopefully, *because* you are not left alone to do it.

The Spirit of God is in Scripture compared to air—to breath. Indeed the word is borrowed from the lower sphere for use in the higher. Christ taught Nicodemus that the Spirit, in conversion, is like the wind. Now, observe how abundant the material breath is, and how near to each of us. How vast the atmospheric ocean, and how closely it wraps itself round our world, and presses upon every part of our frame always! So vast is the ocean, that it has in all ages been a favourite emblem of eternity and infinitude; but the sea of air is immensely greater than the sea of water. The water covers the earth partially; the air covers it all. And the upper ocean is many times deeper than the lower. Both in its universality and its vastness it is a much better emblem of infinitude than the ocean of water. And see how closely it lies to hand, and how easily it is reached for use! It is not necessary to put forth an effort to obtain it for life. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Let a man but gasp, and he gets it in abundance. The moment that there is an emptiness in

your breast the breath of life rushes in. In this matter you have but to hunger, and you are forthwith filled. The Giver of this plentiful supply in nature is not more niggard of his spiritual gifts. "Ye give good gifts to your children; how much more will your Father in heaven give the Spirit to them that ask him?" "Ask, and ye shall receive." Ye that are fathers in the flesh know well how you take pleasure in giving good gifts to your children. Although the young have an advantage over us in many respects, we who are parents have in this an advantage over the children. When I was a child, I was conscious that I was so much a burden to my father, that, although he supplied all my wants, I found it hard to believe that he did it willingly or took any pleasure in the act. I know better now. Not only when they ask, but before they can ask. Before the infant's lips can articulate a word, we grow skilful in interpreting its looks and cries,—we run to fetch the thing we think it wants. These beautiful affections, the planting of the Lord in our own being, will be witnesses against us if we maintain a distant reserve toward our Father in heaven, and suspect him of unwillingness to bestow the best gifts. Specifically and expressly, as we know how to give good gifts unto our children, our Father in heaven will much more give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. But pant for the Spirit, and the aching, inarticulate emptiness, will draw the Spirit in.

IV.

"He shall be Satisfied."

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."
ISAIAH liii. 11.

NO ancient prophet gives clearer testimony to Christ than Isaiah; and nowhere else does Isaiah more articulately proclaim the gospel than here. In no other portion of the Old Testament are the person and work of Immanuel more distinctly revealed. This is one of those lattices in heaven at which the Inheritor of its glory shows himself to the weeping but watchful eye of a ransomed Church, kindling the very love of espousals in an otherwise dark and widowed breast. Let us draw near in company to behold this great sight, a suffering Saviour,—a man burning in the fire of God's anger against sin, and yet not consumed, because that Man of sorrows is also the eternal God.

In this chapter the prophet describes first the suffering of Christ, and then his triumph: in the earlier portion the Son is seen going forth weeping, and bearing precious seed; in the later portion he is seen coming again with

rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. In the middle of verse tenth the description of the suffering ceases, and the fruits of victory begin to appear—"He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

The text presents Christ's completed work in a point of view different from that in which we are most accustomed to regard it. The precise subject to which our attention is invited is not what Christ is to believers, but what believers are to Christ. The satisfaction of which the prophet speaks is not the joy of a sinner in the Saviour who redeems him, but the joy of the Saviour over sinners whom he has redeemed. The redemption of the lost is still the grand object of contemplation; but here it is contemplated as seen, not from earth, but from heaven. We find here not a company of fallen men looking unto Jesus, that they may be saved; but Jesus looking on a company of the saved, that he may be satisfied.

On the Sabbath of our communion we are wont to contemplate, in some of their aspects, "the sufferings of Christ," and this day shall be no exception to the rule; but I would fain ascend to his own stand-point, and see those sufferings in the light in which they appear to himself. We are invited to consider, not what we get out of him, but what he gets out of us. It is the same finished work which we have been wont to gaze upon since first we learned the truth; but we look on it now, not for the

safety that it brings to Christians, but for the satisfaction that it affords to Christ.

It would be pleasant and profitable if we could occasionally rise above the selfish, even in spiritual things, and reach the sphere of generous emotions: if, through the quickening Spirit, we could get past even the desire of good for ourselves, and, in sympathy with the Lord that bought us, partake of the joy that fills his soul as he sees the success of his undertaking, we should assuredly be in a suitable frame for showing forth the Lord's death. It is good to look from the place of a needy sinner upwards in hope to the Lord; but it is better, after having tasted that the Lord is gracious, to look with him, as he looks on the fruit of his suffering, and rejoice with him that his soul has not travailed in vain. It is good to get pardon and peace; but it is better to enter, while yet in the body, into the very joy of the Lord, as he measures his triumph over Satan, and counts his gains in redeemed men, and anticipates his glory when he shall return in power to wind up the history of the world.

I. The travail of his soul.

II. The fruit resulting from the travail of his soul.

III. The satisfaction which he enjoys.

The first two briefly; the third, as the main feature of the text, more fully.

I. *The travail of his soul.*—This seems to be a short expression to indicate the whole of his humiliation, more

especially in its inner and more spiritual aspect. His bodily sufferings, although they more easily touch us,—as being more readily comprehended,—are yet comparatively a small part of his sorrow. His body was like our bodies, and the sufferings that had their seat there were more nearly allied to those that we are called to endure; but the sufferings that had their seat in his soul lie beyond our view, and beyond our comprehension. If we could measure the greatness of his soul, we might then form some adequate estimate of what his soul suffered when it became sorrowful even unto death. We may, however, take note of some of the ingredients that entered into the cup, although we cannot measure the degree of their bitterness :—

1. He who was from all eternity the beloved of his Father put his glory off, and put on our nature.

2. He severed himself from the company of the holy who loved and worshipped him, for the company of the unholy who in feeble friendship vexed or in open enmity crucified him.

3. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I cling to the very words of Scripture here, because not being able to conceive aright the thing signified, I might employ improper word-signs. True it is that he experienced not the horrors which sin sometimes inflicts on a guilty conscience—in this sense sin could not touch the Holy One of God. But his holiness, instead of diminishing, aggravated the pain implied in becoming sin for his

people. How he made sin his own, so as to bear it and endure its punishment, while himself remained holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, we cannot fully comprehend; but we know that he so made sin his own that all his people are for ever relieved of their dark inheritance. And most certainly the holiness of his being did not render the contact of sin less, but more loathsome. In very proportion as his soul is holier than ours, the travail of his soul was deeper when sin was laid upon him as the Lamb of God, that he might take it away.

4. He met personally with the person of the wicked one in our quarrel. True, the strong man was by the stronger overcome, that the captive might be set free; but the agony of soul lay in this, that Jesus the Son of God closed in a death-grapple with the spirit of evil. He must needs extend his arms and grasp the wicked one, in order to crush him. In the contact lay the agony of Immanuel's soul. In himself the eternal Son was beyond the tempter's reach. All the wiles of the devil could not touch him, either to defile or to grieve; but when in our nature, and with our sin, he undertook all our cause, his meeting with the wicked one, if it was not to him dangerous, because he is the Holy, was yet on that very account a heavier travail of his soul. He must needs meet and touch, and, as it were, embrace the devil and all his vileness, that he might quench the fiery darts of the wicked one for us. By his stripes we are healed.

5. His heart was often sore vexed by ignorance, selfishness, unfaithfulness, even of his own selected disciples.

Having left for them the society of the pure and blessed, he found the embrace of his friends like thorns in his breast.

6. The people for whose sake he came into the world —the Israel among whom he was born and bred—would none of him. Over Jerusalem, loved and longed for, he was left to weep bitter tears.

7. The office of the priesthood, which he loved and honoured as God's institute to hold up the promise of redemption, was by those who held it prostituted to reject the counsel of God.

8. But alone, and above all, incomprehensible to us, yet awful both for the part that we know and the part that we know not, is the desertion by the Father, and the final descent of wrath, due to sin, on the Redeemer's soul;—when the Father's vengeance, and that vengeance just, fell full on the beloved of the Father; and that beloved One, knowing that it was a righteous retribution for the guilt that he had assumed as the substitute of sinners, could not challenge the sentence as unjust, but wailed like a suffering child, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Alas, even though our words were all right, how small a portion of the thing that they express can our minds take in! In dealing with the travail of our Redeemer's soul, we are like a child writing down in figures the national debt of the country. The figures are soon written, and they are all correct; but how much of the mighty meaning has entered the mind of that child?

II. *The fruit that results from the travail of his soul.*—It is not to the sufferings in themselves that the Redeemer looks. Herein appears the greatness of his love. He looks over and past the travail of his soul, and fixes his regards on the results that it secures. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die; but that fall and that dying, although they involved the travail of his soul, he passes by, and regards with eager interest the fruit that follows—the life that grows upon death—life of many on the death of one—the life of his people from the dying of himself in their stead. The fruit is that twofold gain which was celebrated in the angels' song at the birth of Christ: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to the children of men." It is not merely the deliverance of a lost world from the doom it deserved; it is the honour given to God by that deliverance. The means and end are linked together as the stalk and the grain in the cornfield: by the redemption of sinners God is glorified; and this double blessing is the fruit springing out of his soul's travail to which the risen Redeemer looks back yet with joy.

Already God was glorious as the wise creator and kind preserver of holy beings who delight to do his will. Already God was glorious as the righteous judge and terrible avenger condemning the transgressors and casting them away. But there is another glory that excelleth these: God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, desired to display that peculiar glory. After exhibiting his goodness in one class of his creatures, and his severity in another,

he will concentrate both these beams of light upon one middle spot, so making it of excelling beauty. He will make mercy and justice meet, and will point to their meeting-place for ever, as the fullest display that can be made to creatures of their Maker's glory: that meeting-place of mercy and judgment is the incarnate Son—God with us. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. And when he has ascended up on high, he has left upon earth a people renewed into his image, in whom some faint outline of his likeness may be discerned. "Father, I am glorified in them."

The Church that he has bought with his blood is the fruit that springs from the travail of the Redeemer's soul.

The tempter bereft of his prey; earth beautified by grace, like myrtles and roses blooming in a desert; a multitude whom no man can number admitted to stand round the throne in white clothing,—these are fruits that spring out of the travail of his soul.

That suffering of Immanuel held deserved wrath back from falling on myriads whom God had made at first in his own image; it permitted God's mercy to flow full upon the rebellious, without dishonouring the divine law; it circumscribed within narrower limits the desolation that sin had wrought in creation; and proportionally enlarged the sphere of actual holiness and blessedness under the rule of the Supreme for ever.

But most of all: it gave vent to an infinite mercy,—opened a channel wherein the infinite but pent-up love

of God might freely flow. God is love: the exercise of loving seems to be, as men speak, the very life of the living God. The sacrifice of Christ opened a new world as a field on which love might flow.

III. *The satisfaction which the Saviour experiences in the results of the travail of his soul.*—Let us endeavour to realize that eager gaze with which the risen Redeemer contemplates from his throne the fruit of his own sufferings. It is not our look towards a completed redemption which we need, and without which we must perish. This look is good and necessary; but it is not the only good and necessary thing. This we ought to do; but there is another we ought not to leave undone. We are too apt to let the near horizon of our own need limit our view. We think on the one hand of a sinner looking from his depths with strong crying and tears, looking to Jesus that he may be saved; and of saints looking to that same Jesus with joyful songs as their substitute and their righteousness. But there are other lookers besides anxious sinners and joyful saints; and other points of view besides those which these two classes respectively occupy. Angels look in wonder towards the most wonderful work of God. But besides all these, there is yet another eye more constantly and more intently fixed on the same all-attractive object—the fruit of the Redeemer's sufferings—and that eye is the Redeemer's own. He does not pass by, when his saving effort has been put forth, as if that were all. He lingers on the

spot, and looks and longs to see men actually saved through his suffering for sin. "His delights were with the sons of men" from the past eternity, in anticipation of his saving work; and now that the work is completed, he is not content that his suffering should be fruitless. As in his experience and according to his word, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" so, conversely, it is more painful to miss the greater blessing than to miss the less. He rejoices more in giving salvation than men in getting it; and on the same principle, he longs more earnestly to bestow than even his own long to get mercy from his hand. The Head might adopt in even an intensified form the plaintive language of the members; he might truly say, "My soul waiteth for you, more than they that watch for the morning;"—more than weary benighted watchers wait for the dawning of the day, the Lord who suffered for us longs and looks for the multitudes coming to himself for life, as the fruits of his dying.

Why should He who inhabits the praises of eternity bend over these ransomed men, as if they were his only portion? This work that God gazes on is the greatest work of God. In all the infinitude which his being pervades and his power controls, there is not any work equal to this. When he beheld the result of his creating word, he pronounced it good; but when he beheld the result of his redeeming work, his soul was satisfied.

After all that the Son of God has seen in the successions of eternity and the contents of space, the end is

not yet; he does not say, It is enough. There remains still a longing, still an unsatisfied desire. Passing all the glories of earth and heaven as Samuel passed the sons of Jesse, he does not fix in fullest complacency of choice until the last and youngest born passes by. Then he is arrested: This—this is he. This is he whom my soul loveth. This satisfies my soul.

How comes it that this new creature is graven more deeply on the heart of the Eternal Son than all his other works? The text tells: those other possessions were created by his word, or fashioned by his hand, but this springs from the travail of his soul. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" She may; yet will not the Redeemer forget his own. This comparison suggests the reason of Christ's peculiar regard for those who have been redeemed by his blood. He has travailed as in birth for them. His suffering in bringing these sons to glory has graven them on his heart. We speak of having Christ dwelling in our heart: it is well; this is a great attainment; it is specifically our hope of glory. But the converse is a greater thing: disciples dwell in his heart, his hope of glory in the great day. It was when his heart was poured out within him like water, in suffering for their sins—it was when he was melted in the furnace of the wrath of God, that their persons and their interests, their names and images, were printed into his being, never, never to be blotted out. The names of the tribes, though engraved deep in precious

stones, might at last be worn off the high priest's breastplate; but the name and the nature, the sorrows and the joys, the hopes and the fears, of each believing man, are stamped on the memory of Jesus, so that they shall be for ever legible in the light of heaven. They were printed into him at the dread hour when his soul was made an offering for sin. It is because they cost him so much that he cherishes them so fondly. They lay upon his soul when it was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; and all the weight of condemnation which he bore went to impress their image on his heart. Now they are part of himself, continually before him. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

The pardoning of sin is a unique and peculiar work of God. It is not with him such a common and everyday kind of operation, that he should do it and forget it as soon as it is done. We have no reason to think that in all the eternity of God's being, and in all his dependent universe, it has ever happened except this once; here on our world, and in favour of our race. A thousand years are with the Lord as one day, and all the breadth of the world's history appears but as a point from the throne of the Eternal; and so the exercise of mercy to sinners is one luminous point in infinitude. Might we not think, after the manner of men, indeed, but true as far as it goes —might we not think of God longing for the time appointed in his own counsel for the exercise of the attribute in which he most delights? And when the fulness of time had come, might we not think of Immanuel, God

with us, luxuriating with peculiar complacency in the outflow of his own compassion,—a compassion which in him is from everlasting the same, but whose objects in creation were now for the first time found? This is not a limitation of the Infinite; for it was his own wise counsel that so arranged the plan.

We are limited creatures; our capacity is small. When something is wanting to complete the filling of this little vessel, that something is not great. The longing for it is correspondingly feeble. But think of it, when the Son of God pines for want of what he loves and needs, how great his longing must be!—how great the joy when he obtains all at length! In proportion to his essential greatness as God must be the strength of his desire for what will satisfy him—must be the delight of his soul when he obtains it. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, how much the Son of God desires to have saved men as the fruit of his soul's travail, how much he rejoices when he gets the satisfying of his soul. That which cost him less, he less enjoys. Without the Son was not any thing made that was made. He called the angels into being by his word; he strewed the vault of heaven with shining worlds, and bade them by their movements show forth his praise; he furnished this beautiful earth, and restrained the sea within the hollow of his hand. As to all these, he spake and it was done; he commanded and they stood fast. But to shield rebellious men from the wrath of God, and yet honour God's law by the act; to cleanse the morally

corrupt from the defilement of their nature, and restore them to their place as sons of God; to call the spiritually dead to life, and instil into the slave the spirit of adoption; to redeem, too, the body from corruption, and give it a glory that should be suitable for heaven,—a word of wisdom and a deed of power will not suffice. These sons of God were placed so high, that when they fell, they fell into a great deep. To lift them up again, his soul must take their souls' place; he must give himself an offering for sin; he must take their place under the sentence, that they may obtain his in God's favour. He suffered, the just for the unjust: it is this which makes the ransomed so dear to their Redeemer. Those for whom his soul travailed satisfy his soul.

Are there some here who have taken refuge in Christ, and have now peace in believing? You rejoice in your Saviour. I shall tell you another truth: your Saviour rejoices over you. Do you experience a secret shrinking from this announcement, as if it put you in a place inconsistent with the humility which becomes you in view of your own worthlessness? This shrinking is the result of a mistake; the value that Christ sets upon the souls that he has saved does not rest on their worth. It is not your goodness; it is his own love. Judge even by yourselves: if you should happen to be at hand when a poor man has fallen into the water, and is on the point of being drowned; and if you should, in obedience to the best impulses left in nature, plunge in, and with a strong arm rescue him who was ready to perish, you would that

night have very pleasant reflections of the day. You would be happier than the man who by a sudden stroke has made a fortune. You are full of joy: you reflect on the travail, the risk and effort of saving; you reflect on the travail of your soul, and are satisfied. Suppose the poor beggar whom you rescued should hear of your joy; suppose he should take it into his head that you were entertaining a very exalted notion of his worth; and suppose that in a fit of modesty he should seek admission into your presence, and intimate, by way of diminishing your delight, that he is a man of very ordinary character indeed. You would resent the impertinent intrusion. Your satisfaction had not reference to his worth or his unworthiness: it had reference, on one side, only to his need; and on the other, to those instincts of your nature which still remain true, and delight in the act of saving a fellow-creature from death.

Thus it is altogether out of place for a believer who has been redeemed by Christ to shrink back from the doctrine of this text, as if it made much of his worth. It makes nothing of your worth. It acknowledges nothing on your side but the deepest want, and on Christ's side a supreme satisfaction in saving him who is ready to perish.

Are there here some who have been in a measure convinced of sin, and have begun to inquire, "What must we do to be saved?" And are these held back from hope, as not daring to believe that the Holy One of God would come so close and do so much for them, and that because they are not good? "What think ye of Christ," brethren?

You seem to think him a sort of Pharisee, who would associate only with the good, and turn away his head from a sinner. You seem to credit him with a disregard of the neediest, and a desire to keep company with those who will cost him nothing. Ah, brethren, it was for the unworthy that his soul travailed; and when he sees, as the fruit of his sufferings, the unworthy trusting in his blood, this sight satisfies his soul. Search and see: perhaps this fear is a deeply disguised hypocrisy. Perhaps your inmost heart is unwilling to part with its idols, and sets up as an excuse for not coming to Christ, that it is afraid Christ will not receive such an one. Him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. But are you willing to come?

Are there some here who are Christians in word, but not in deed,—who wear an outside profession, but will not permit Christ to reign in their hearts. Ah, friends, I speak not at present of danger to you, I remind you rather of disappointment to the Lord. You are not getting a Saviour; but more than that, the Saviour is not getting you. His meat is to do the will of Him that sent him,—that is, to win souls; but you, by refusing to ask and accept his redeeming love, you are grieving Christ, you are mocking his tears,—you are giving him a stone instead of bread.

V.

The First Promise.

"*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.*"—GENESIS iii. 15.

THE feeble beginning of a great thing inspires you with reverence, if you know as you look upon it the greatness of its issue. When a traveller has at length reached the source of the Nile, and gazes upon the well's eye among the central mountains of Africa where the mighty river has its birth, he is filled with wonder and awe. His emotion, however, is not due to the sight which then and there he looks upon: it is the greatness of the full-grown river that imparts so much interest to the infant spring. A native who sees that spring every day, looks upon it lightly, because he has never seen the infant in its manhood—knows not that the infant has a mighty manhood far away.

Here, in this verse, first springs a river which flows right through the broad wilderness of Time, refreshing every generation as they pass; and will yet, beyond the boundary, make glad for ever the city of our God. In

this verse the gospel of grace takes its rise. If we saw only the tiny spring, we should not be able fully to estimate its importance. It is our knowledge of the kingdom in its present dimensions and its future prospects that invests with so much grandeur this first, short message, of mercy from God to man. We know the import of that message better than they who heard it first. And yet, as the negro native on the mountains near the sources of the Nile can drink and satisfy his thirst from the tiny rill that constitutes the embryo river, while he who sails on its broad bosom near the sea can do no more; so those who lived in the earliest days of grace might satisfy their souls at the narrow stream then flowing, as well as those who shall be found dwelling on the earth at the dawn of the millennial day. From the feeble stream that burst through the stony ground near the closed gate of Paradise righteous Abel freely drank the water of life: the same, and no more, shall they do who shall see the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth in the latter day. God opened a spring in the desert as soon as there were thirsty souls sojourning there.

Here, as we have said, the Gospel springs. But this is not the beginning of mercy. Its date is more ancient; its fountain-head is higher. "God is love:" there, if you will trace mercy to its ultimate source—there Redemption springs, thence Redemption flows. From that upper spring it came; and having found its way through secret channels, it burst forth here, in the form of the primeval promise, at the feet of the fallen race. "From the Father

of lights cometh down every good and perfect gift." From him, first and last, the gift unspeakable has come.

Thus sprang that common water in Jacob's well, of which although the thirsty drink, he shall thirst again. If it had not fallen first from heaven, it would not have boiled up through rifts in the rock. Such also is the law which the living water obeys. It springs in the wilderness, and follows the pilgrim's path, because it has first dropped in showers from heaven. Love to the lost springs in the first page of the Bible, at the beginning of time, because it dwelt in God without limit from eternity.

At present I propose to deal only with the first clause of the verse—the promise that enmity shall be generated between the serpent and the woman—between his seed and hers. But even on this limited field I must make a selection. Many things must be assumed; for to pause and expound each preliminary idea would detain us all our allotted time in the vestibule; so that we could not, on this occasion at least, penetrate into the temple where the mercy-seat is shining, illumined by its own light.

One or two things of an introductory character must be at least stated, inasmuch as they are essential to the comprehension of the main lesson. And the first of these is the existence and agency of an evil spirit, the enemy of man. On this subject it is easy to raise formidable difficulties. If we should launch into speculation regarding what is possible in this sphere, or what is consistent with the power and the goodness of God, we

should very soon lose our way. I confine myself to the region of facts. Moral evil exists, and spreads like a flood over the world. This no sober man can deny, or, without Scripture, explain. The Bible, with wonderful explicitness, and with as wonderful reserve, proclaims and denounces the author and introducer of sin. "Didst thou not sow good seed in thy ground?" said the surprised and grieved servants to their Master; "whence, then, hath it tares?" "An enemy hath done this," said the Lord. To make sure that no reader should fail to lay open the folds of the figure, and gather the kernel of revealed truth which lay beneath them, he afterwards explained without a parable: "The enemy that sowed them is the Devil." Here let the speculations of Christians cease. I rest in this: I thank my Lord for this word. It tells two cheering truths: first, that the enemy is not God; and, second, that though sin has now deeply tinged our nature, our nature is not in its essence and always sinful. Man has been damaged by the impact of evil after he came from his Maker's hands; and the damage, now that help has been laid on the Mighty, may be removed. There is a healing for the deadly wound.

The enemy, in this text and in other instances all through the Scripture, is impersonated as the serpent. Now a series of lessons directly practical:—

1. There is a kind of friendship or alliance between the destroyer and his dupe. The root of the ailment lies here. It was by an alliance with the serpent that

sin was introduced: it is the continuance of that alliance that gives sin its power in the world still. If the first pair had not entered into a covenant with the Wicked One, there would not have been a fall.

Neither at the first nor at any subsequent period has the enemy come forward as an enemy, declaring war, and depending on the use of force. Not the power, but the wiles of the Devil have we cause to dread. If either he or we should assume the attitude of adversary, our cause were won. Knowing that he lacks power to destroy God's creatures, he simulates friendship, and persuades them to destroy themselves. On the other hand, if we count and treat the Devil as an enemy, we shall overcome him. The principle is expressed in the psalm—"When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back. This I know, for God is for me" (Ps. lvi. 9). The turning point is, "When I cry." It means, when I am no longer in with my destroyer, I have the Omnipotent on my side. It is when we are traitors to ourselves that the adversary gains the advantage.

When evil spirits dwelt and ruled in living men during the period of the Lord's personal ministry, there seems to have been a fast bond of friendship between the Tempter and the tempted. The captive was a willing captive: if he had not been willing, he would not have been a captive. The man was on the side of the evil spirit that possessed him. His lips obeyed the vile inspiration, and replied to Jesus, "What have we to do with thee?"

It is here that the Tempter's power lies to-day. If we were not on his side, he could do us no harm. The City of Mansoul has walls and bulwarks impregnable by all the power of the Wicked One. The adversary could neither force the gates nor undermine the ramparts. It is only when the inhabitant Soul within, turning traitor to itself and its rightful King, admits the enemy by a postern, that the defences can be won.

A soul in love with the lust that defiles it, is led captive by that lust. The difficulty lies here. There is help at hand; but the sinner, in love with his sin, does not want a helper. A soul's love of sin is the hinge on which the loss of a soul turns. It is not wise, in the treatment either of ourselves or of others, to despise the pleasures of sin. It is quite true that they are poisonous, and will ultimately destroy; but it is also true that they are sweet, and have power to entice.

2. Enmity must be engendered between these two friends. The first and fundamental necessity of the case is that the friendship should be dissolved. As long as the adversary by his wiles succeeds in making it sweet, and as long as the dupe loves it, so long is the captive held. Nothing in heaven or earth can do a sinner any good until he has fallen out with his own sin!

A well-beloved son of an honoured house has taken up with an unprincipled companion. The favourite has obtained, and maintains the mastery over the youth. Coaxing and threatening are alike unavailing. The dupe loves his destroyer—and loves more fondly the

more he is reproved for his mad devotion. The patient will not begin to amend until that love be converted into loathing. You cannot by any appliance do him any good as long as he dotes upon a lewd companion. When that friendship is dissolved you may lead the prodigal home, but not till then. The case of a human spirit and its own destroyer is more difficult in this respect, that you cannot separate the lovers as long as they are lovers. Although it is defective as being outward and mechanical, still a physical separation effected by a parent's authority between his bewitched child and his child's bewitcher may produce a diversion in favour of the right. Although the cure is not complete until the heart repudiates its corrupt affection, the evil results may be in some measure diminished by an enforced separation. The offended but loving father has still the resource left, of forbidding the ensnarer his house, —a resource which, although defective at best as a cure, is by no means despicable as an alleviation. But in the case of a fast friendship between a human spirit and its own tempter, no such resource is open. The enchanter comes and goes unseen. The enchanted opens the door to admit his destroyer, and none can observe the fact. Hearts open their gates in secret for secret intercourse with thoughts. Seven devils may possess a man while he bows his head like a bulrush in the house of God. Spirits come and go, like bees to and from their hive, with this difference, that they are not seen at all. No watch that another may set can scare away these mid-

night visitors, or put to shame their entertainers. Not a beginning of good to the soul can be made, until enmity begin between the soul and its sin.

Nor will a simulated enmity be of any avail. The alliance has been real for the soul's undoing: the rupture must be real ere the soul can be saved. A man may repeat many unexceptionable prayers for the pardon of his sin, and deliverance from its power, and yet all the while be as much in love with it as ever, hugging it in his bosom, and determined not to let it go. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." To keep up appearances, it will hypocritically call on God to take sin away, while it is determined to hold it fast. The man cries out in presence of his neighbours,—"Cut off this right hand; pluck out this right eye;" while he holds to these members as to life, and will not let them go.

3. God will put enmity between a man and the enemy who has enticed, and so overcome him. When created beings are involved in sin, as a law of their being they cannot break off by an effort or wish of their own. The spirit that launches once into rebellion against God, goes on helplessly in rebellion for ever, unless an almighty arm, guided by infinite love, be stretched out to arrest the fallen,—the falling star. Matter is passive: when it is placed at rest, it remains at rest; when it is set in motion, it continues in motion for ever, unless something external to itself stop its progress. A world set in motion through space can no more stop its motion than it could begin it.

The law that rules spirits seems to be similar. When the holy in heaven have been thrown forth into a career of holy obedience, as the planets were launched in their courses, they will run in that race for ever. Like the sun in his course shall the righteous be, running their race rejoicing—with this difference, that they shall never grow dim with age, and never stand still. On the other hand, when the apostate are given over,—cast out of God's hand,—they go on in that course without turning. Their progress is towards the blackness of darkness for ever.

Like the outcast are the sinful now, in all but one thing,—their day of mercy has not run out. God has not given them over. This makes the difference. From edge to edge of time his hand is felt interfering. He never ceases to strive with man, until he has passed the border of the allotted day, and entered into night. When the Lord Jesus looked down on the inhabitants of Jerusalem with their day of grace done, he wept over them.

It is profitable to remember that we are helpless. It is only a cry out of the depths that will reach heaven, and bring help from One that is mighty. "Lord, save me, I perish," is a prayer that reaches the Redeemer's ear: it melts his heart, and moves his hand.

The special step, or turning-point, which lies beyond the power of man, and is competent only to God, is to put enmity between the serpent and the woman—between her seed and his. To dissolve the friendship

between a soul and its sin belongs to the hand of God in the covenant of grace. To put enmity between a man and the devil who inhabits his heart—to change his affections, so that he shall henceforth loathe what he formerly loved, and love what he formerly loathed,—this is God's prerogative. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

He is offering to do it: he is doing it now. He is pressing on our spirits as the atmosphere leans upon the earth,—pressing to sever the bond by which the Tempter holds the will a captive. This is proved by the evangelical precept, "Quench not the Spirit." It is proved by the threatening, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Not always strive:" that warning intimates that he strives long—is striving now. Yield yourselves unto God: he is striving, he is pressing now.

4. Notice now the relation which Christ our Redeemer bears to the breach of peace between a man and his Tempter. Over and above the promise that enmity will be put between the serpent and the woman, it is said in the text that enmity will be put between his seed and hers. We are guided by the Spirit of inspiration in the interpretation of this clause. We know certainly from Scripture, "her seed" means first and chiefly the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. As enmity between the two friends must be generated, and as only God can efficiently kindle that enmity, so it is only through Christ the Mediator that such a breach could be made. Enmity between the parties could not spontaneously

arise. One of the two, the Tempter, would not; the other, the tempted, could not. Left to ourselves, it would have been, once in, always in. A fast friendship with our destroyer would have been the history of the human race. The serpent holds the bird charmed, and so devours it. The drugged spirit, steeped in the indulgence of the sin it loved, would never have awakened out of sleep, and never broken the spell. But the Mediator accomplished the work. He undertakes a work of separation, as well as a work of union. He breaks before he binds: he breaks in order that he may bind. He has undertaken first to convert an old love into a new enmity; and next to convert an old enmity into a new love. The branch is cut out of the old root, and then graffed into the good Vine. The task of alienating friends is one part of Christ's mission, and the work of reconciling enemies is another. He does both. The one cannot be done without the other. As there is no way of introducing day without dispelling the night, so there is no way of reconciling us to God without also producing an enmity where a friendship had existed, between our souls and their sin. He made an end of sin, by making an end of the peace between man possessed and the evil spirit possessing. As our representative he met the Tempter, and for us began the quarrel. He hated evil perfectly, eternally, unchangeably. The evil spirits, whenever he approached, felt the breath of his holiness like a consuming fire. "Who art thou, Jesus? Art thou come to torment us?"

We need and get Christ as Mediator on either side. He is Mediator between God and man, for reconciling the alienated; he is Mediator between man and Satan, for alienating the united. As his acceptance with the Father is our acceptance with the Father, when we are found in him; so his breach with the adversary is our breach, when we are found in him. His twofold mission is, to break up one friendship, and begin another. Upward and heavenward, Christ's work for us is to reconcile those who were at enmity: downward and sinward, his work for us is to produce enmity between those who were friends. He came not to send peace on earth. He came to kindle a fire—a fire of irreconcilable hatred, where peace had reigned before, between each repenting sinner and his own besetting sin. And, oh! how ardently he wills—wishes, that the fire should be kindled immediately.

As is the Head, so are the members. He is at enmity with the Wicked One. When we are in him, we are heirs to his wars on the one side as well as to his friendships on the other. We partake of his hates as well as of his loves. These two, indeed, are one. To be at enmity with our own sin is the under side of being reconciled to God by the death of his Son; and to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son is the upper side of hatred to all unholiness. Christ's members, in virtue of their union to him, hate what he hates, and love what he loves; and these two are one.

5. The part which Christians act in the quarrel. Christ

was the first-fruits in this enmity; but afterwards, they that are Christ's. In him the strife began; and it is continued in his members after the Head is exalted. The feud is hereditary, inextinguishable, eternal. The Church on earth is the Church militant; that is, the Church soldiering. There is another wing of the grand army, called the Church triumphant. Those who remain in the body wield the sword: those who have been admitted into heaven wave the palm and wear the crown.

The real business in hand for Christians is not heaven, but holiness. The issue may be left in the Leader's hands: the duty of the soldiers is to stand where they are placed, and strike as long as they see a foe. Until the trumpet shall sound, calling the weary to rest, our part is to fight. Woe to the deceiver who fraternizes with the enemy, or strikes with half his force a feeble blow! The kingdom of heaven is within you; within you, therefore, its battles must be fought and its victories won. Strike, and spare not for their crying.

It is not a languid expectation of an easy heaven: it is a battle that is before us to-day. He is the best soldier in the warfare who hates most his Sovereign's enemy and his own. Polluting lust is the spark that kindles hell: there is no other way of being saved from that burning than by stamping out the embers of sin that lie hidden in the ashes of your own heart. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Sweet promise! yea, sweet promise and stern command, united together as firmly as the warp and the woof of

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the garment that you wear. Take it whole, and it will cover you; but take one half, and the other will fall asunder, like loose threads, and leave the wearer naked. God will subdue the adversary; but he will subdue him under your feet. You must yield yourselves as his instruments to crush with your own will all the old serpent's folds.

A winged creature, a timid, feeble dove, is held captive in a tiger's claws. The tyrant, sure of his morsel, does not instantly devour it. It is his instinct to play with it a while, as if to whet his appetite. He lets it go, and seizes it again. This he does, once, twice, often. In a moment, in the pauses of the cruel sport, the feeble bird gets wing, and flies. Up, up it soars; away and away into the blue, while the greedy, cruel monster, gnashes his hungry teeth, and looks after it in impotent rage.

So a bird escapes from the destroyer's gin; so a soul escapes from the enemy of the soul.

VI.

"Prayer with Thanksgiving."

"*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*"—PHILIPPIANS iv. 6.

THE two precepts of this verse balance each other. Both must be included in one view. The first, especially, would be misunderstood if it stood alone. The first forbids carefulness; the second enjoins prayerfulness. These two precepts are so connected by the particle "but" as to exclude each other. You may have either, but you cannot have both. The careful is not prayerful; the prayerful is not careful. These two seem to lie before us for our choice; and a heavenly monitor comes to tell us which is the good part. Put away the care, and betake yourself to prayer. Do not attempt to bear the government on your own shoulders, but cast your burden on the Lord. Do not cumber and crush your spirit by the many things not needful; but go to Jesus' feet and await his will.

The apostles followed the Lord in their doctrinal teach-

ing more closely than most readers of the Bible perceive. I think in balancing the two precepts of this verse, Paul had Martha and Mary in his eye. Be not careful, Martha: sit like Mary at the Redeemer's feet. Do not attempt to be a god unto yourself: avouch the Lord to be your God. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."

The first clause points only to such carefulness as is inconsistent with prayerfulness. Whatever kind and degree of care can go along with a simple trust in God at every turn, is lawful and right. The apostle forbids only that atheistic care which asserts the government of life for the creature, and refuses to cast its burden for time and eternity on the Lord. In husbandry we are fellow-workers with God; he prescribes our specific work, and undertakes his own. So also in the culture of human spirits, our own and others, as a field for fruit unto God; Paul must plant, Apollos water, and God giveth the increase.

Consider now the second and larger of the two precepts by itself. Henceforth we confine our regard to the specific and minute injunction regarding prayer: "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

I shall endeavour to explain the three clauses of the text separately and in succession, beginning, however, with the last and ascending to the first.

I. Let your requests be made known unto God.
II. By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.
III. In everything.

I. *Let your requests be made known unto God.*

"*Requests.*"—All creatures are dependent. The earth by dumb signs asks rain from heaven to refresh its dust, and make it fruitful. The air asks continual supply of moisture out of its store-house in the ocean. The ocean itself, although it is sometimes, on account of its comparative vastness, considered an emblem of immensity, yet seeks and gets its wants made up by the constant inflow of all the rivers. All are needy, none self-existent: all seek their supply, and obtain it, from Him in whom all fulness dwells. Living creatures, too, seek their meat from God. These all wait on him. That which he scatters on the ground they gather.

Man, with the greatest capacity, is distinguished from the rest by the greatest need. As the child in the human family is much more dependent on a parent's care than the young of other creatures, so man himself, the child of God's family, needs much more from the heavenly Father's hand. The capacity of man is very great; and when he is empty, it requires much to fill the void. How many times a man of threescore and ten has breathed since first he saw the light! All these years, summer and winter, day and night, he has every moment been opening his mouth wide, and every time getting it filled with vital air. How vast the supply of air pro-

vided, and how closely it lies to his lips! A whole heaven full overhead, and the edge of it continually leaning on our lips wherever we go. We do not need, when we travel, to provide waggons to carry our breathing air with us. Like the water out of the rock, it follows us in plenty all the way. The act of breathing seems an emblem at once of the creature's continual need, and the Creator's abundant supply. With us there is emptiness, with him there is fulness; and, as in the case of breathing, the emptiness of the creature draws supply from God. His goodness has compassed us about, like the atmosphere; and when we open our mouth, it is filled with good.

"Let your requests be made known *unto God:*" The lower part of our nature we have in common with the beasts, and God supplies its wants as he supplies theirs. He gives us breath when we sleep, and are as unconscious as the cattle grazing in the field. But God desires company among his creatures. He did not find among them any one fit for communion with himself, until he had made man in his own image. He made an intelligent being, that he might have intercourse with the work of his own hands. We have had fathers of our flesh who loved to supply the wants of their children. Inconceivably greater is God's delight in hearing the requests and supplying the wants of those whom he made to be his children. Fathers of our flesh are subject to two infirmities—a defective love in their hearts, and a defective supply in their hands; that is, they sometimes will not,

and sometimes cannot, give what their children desire. But our Father in heaven is not limited on either side; his joy, therefore, in hearing prayer and answering it, is full.

Further: when man fell, and the relation was broken off,—when the branch was withered, and the channel by which the Vine had supplied it was conclusively shut up, he was not willing that it should continue shut. At a great price, by the sacrifice of his own Son, he opened the channel again. So much did God delight in giving to supply the need of men, that when that relation was broken off by our sin, he restored it again, by a new and living way through the blood of the Lamb, that he might enter again into his own peculiar joy,—the joy of giving to the needy at their cry.

God has through Christ made known his fulness; surely we should through Christ make known to him our need. "*Your* requests;" your own; not what other people have asked, or what you have learned to repeat. Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst of his disciples, and said they must receive the kingdom like this little child. Even among his own chosen followers, who were in the main true, he was grieved with their formal Pharisaism. There was much of what was put on,—things done by imitation and by custom. He longed to have his disciples free from mere earthly conventionality; he loathed all that was unreal. The atoms of the unreal and formal that mingled in their service, were to him like stones in the bread that he ate. Give me, he said, a

little child's simplicity. The wants it cries for are its own wants; the cries it utters, whether intelligent or not, are real, and not feigned. They spring like water in a well. Such are the prayers that God loves to hear. Not long, or short; elegant, or rude; printed, or extemporaneous—not these. What then? what requests does he love to hear? "*Your* requests."

> "Such pity as a father hath
> Unto his children dear;
> Like pity shews the Lord to such
> As worship him in fear." (Ps. ciii. 13.)

Search and see what element it is in the request of his little child that goes like an arrow to a parent's heart, filling that heart with delight, and opening sluices for a flood of gifts—it is this, they are the own requests of his own child. "*Your* requests." This quality of *yours* will cover a multitude of sins against grammar and other earthly laws.

II. *By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.*

"*Prayer.*"—This is the soul's believing and reverential approach unto God. It is the prelude or preface alike to the request and the thanksgiving. It is the act of getting yourself introduced, and the intercourse begun. The pattern prayer which Jesus dictated contains this part at its commencement, in the words, "Our Father who art in heaven." This, you perceive, is neither a request nor a thanksgiving. It is neither a petition for some benefit nor an ascription of praise. These both

follow. The supplications accompanied with the thanksgiving immediately follow; but this appellation goes first. This is the sharp point sent upward first, to make way for the prayer that is about to follow.

"*Supplication.*"—This term specifically means the request the suppliant prefers. But while the word means asking, its radical signification is *want*. It indicates, in its origin, emptiness, need; and thence it came to mean a craving for supply. It means the need which demands supply, or the asking which springs from a sense of emptiness. The six petitions of the Lord's Prayer constitute the supplication.

"*With thanksgiving.*"—This does not mean that the supplication and the thanksgiving necessarily in all cases refer to the same thing. Indeed, the ordinary rule is quite the reverse. The supplication is sent up for something which at the moment you do not possess; whereas the thanksgiving is offered on account of something that you have already obtained.

Assuming what has been already explained, that the first, the prayer, is the introduction or approach of the soul to God—the opening of the conference, clearing the way alike for supplication and for praise—let us now fix our thoughts on the union and relation of these two constituent elements of a soul's communion with God—these two, asking for mercies, and offering thanks.

Notice, first of all, the peculiar form of the phraseology, —"Supplication with thanksgiving." It seems to intimate

that we are apt to leave out this latter ingredient, and to warn us that the omission of this will vitiate all. To ply the asking, without the song of praise, seems like taking some ingredients of the physician's prescription and leaving out one. The want of that one renders the whole application of none effect. "With thanksgiving," —this should accompany every prayer.

The currents of grace run in circles as well as those of nature. The electric current does not go along the wire unless it comes back through the earth to complete the circle. A picture of it is seen in a well-known apparatus for ventilation. A tube divided longitudinally into two, or two tubes joined together, stretch from the interior of a building through the roof into the air. The air flows up through one lobe of the tube out of the building, and down through the other lobe into the building. When the process is set agoing it continues. But if you stop the ascending current, you thereby also make the descending current to cease; and if you stop the descending current, the ascending one is arrested too.

A fact in the ministry of the Lord contains the same lesson that is here taught by his apostle. Indeed the apostle is here only exercising his function of explaining the lessons of the Master's life. The ten lepers came to Jesus with prayer and supplication. They lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." He gave them their request. But only one of the ten put in his request with thanksgiving; only one remem-

bered to put that ingredient in his communion with the Lord; only one continued the circle, and answered the getting of mercy by the giving of praise. The Lord marked and mentioned the omission. He felt well pleased with the circle of communion completed in the one who returned to give thanks; but he left on record for all ages his disappointment with those who greedily snatched the gift and forgot the Giver: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

When there is spiritual life, the weight of God's mercies pressing down forces the sacrifice of thanksgiving up. The pressure of the air does not make the heavy, sluggish water rise; whatever weight of air may press upon it, the water lies heavy in its bed. But when water is etherealized into vapour, then the weight of the air makes the vapour rise. The load of benefits that pressed on the nine lepers, finding their souls dull and dead, did not move them upwards; but the same load on the one Samaritan, finding him spiritually quickened, pressed his thanksgiving up to the Throne.

The circulations of the ocean constitute a plain and permanent picture of these relations between a human soul and a redeeming God. The sea is always drawing what it needs down to itself, and also always sending up of its abundance into the heavens. It is always getting, and always giving. So, when in the covenant the true relation has been constituted, the redeemed one gets and gives, gives and gets; draws from God a stream of benefits, sends up to God the incense of praise.

III. *In every thing. In every thing prayer with thanksgiving.*

1. "*In every thing prayer.*"—Approach to God and make your requests known at all times, in all places, and about all things. It is not in some great emergencies that you should pray, and transact the lesser affairs of life on your own account. Not on the Sabbath only, but on all the days of the week. Not only in the church, or in the prayer-meeting, but in the work-shop and the counting-house. Not only before and after religious solemnities, but also in connection with your gain, or your rest, or your relaxation.

Our Father takes it ill if we send in our request for the pardon of sin, but ask not his counsel about the choice of a companion, or an investment in trade.

He is not a man of little faith who puts little things into his prayer. That very thing shows him to be a man of great faith. A feeble pulsation in the heart may keep the life-blood circulating for a while near the centre and in the vitals; but it requires a great strong life in the heart to send the blood down into the tips of the fingers, and make it circulate through the outmost, smallest branches of the veins. In like manner, it is the strongest spiritual life that animates the whole course, even to the minutest transactions, and brings to God the smallest matters of our personal history as well as the great concern of pardon and eternal life.

"*Every thing:*" whatever is a thing to you, whatever lodges about your heart, either as a joy that you cherish

or a grief that you are unable to shake away,—in with it into your prayer, up with it to the Throne. It is not right to choose, out of the multitude of thoughts within you, all the grave and goodly, and marshal them by themselves into a prayer. This is like one who had wheat to sell, and sat down and picked out all the full and plump seeds and brought them to market, while the heap was half made up of shrivelled, unripened grains. Prayer in secret, is a pouring out of the soul before God; and if it is not a pouring, it is not prayer. Anything left behind, cherished in you but concealed from God, vitiates all,—takes away the comfort from you, and hinders the answer from God.

2. "*In every thing with thanksgiving.*"—There is nothing here enjoined that is contrary to nature. His commandments are not grievous. You need not give thanks *for* suffering; but even *in* sorrow there is room for praise.

There are two things for which we may and should give praise at all times, even in suffering. One is, thanks in suffering for the things that you do not suffer: for example, when in bodily pain, if the mind is clear; or when suffering from calumny, thanks for a good conscience toward God; or when you have lost your money, if your children survive.

Another is, for the good that even sorrow brings, for the fruit that it bears unto holiness. Suppose your tears flow for conviction of your sins; your peace is disturbed; the terrors of the Lord are drinking you up: "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" The

very next word that escaped the apostle's lips after that wail of agony is, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thank God for convictions of sin, for they are the marks of his mercy; these are the footsteps of the Redeemer when he comes to save.

But in all cases, even in all extremities, there still remains that short, strong anthem, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift." However dark the day may be, impenetrable clouds covering all the heavens and shutting out the day, you know well that the sun is in the heavens, and will shine forth again as bright as ever when these clouds have passed away: so, "The Lord liveth. Blessed be my Rock."

But the end of the whole matter is this,—this command will not be obeyed by those who are at enmity with God. This command is addressed to disciples, and only disciples can render obedience to it. There is one commandment that must go foremost, and make a way for all the rest; and this is his commandment, that ye should believe on his Son whom he has sent. To be reconciled unto God through the death of his Son,—this is the one thing needful to all true obedience; and so especially this law of God, that in every thing we should pray to him and give thanks, cannot be put in practice by an alienated and suspicious heart.

Command, did I say? No, not the command of a master which the slave must obey; it is rather a privilege conferred, which a dear child will gladly accept.

The Queen does not make requests, does not even

offer gifts; she commands those whom she favours to accept what she desires to bestow. Such is the formula which has grown into use as the most fitting medium for conveying a sovereign's gifts. The form is seemly, and the idea in which it originated is just. Yet the command of the sovereign is in its essence a bounty bestowed, is the greatest favour that a subject can receive.

So here, when the King eternal means to confer on his child the richest privilege, he throws it into the form of a command. "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God;"—that is the King's method of conveying to me the glad intelligence that I am permitted to pour out all my joys and sorrows on his breast. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." He who spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?

[Not many weeks before his death, Mr. Arnot came on this verse in the course of expounding the Epistle to the Philippians. He gave a short summary of it, which he had found somewhere, and thought well worth preserving:—

"Be careful for *no*thing.
Be prayerful for *every*thing.
Be thankful for *any*thing."

A little child some time afterwards, overhearing his father speaking with anxiety about business, quoted these words, saying: "Do you remember what Mr. Arnot told us?"]

VII.

Lazarus is Dead.

"*Lazarus is dead, and I am glad.*"—JOHN xi. 14, 15.

JESUS said, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad." What strange paradox have we here! What change has come over this divinely tender human heart? Does our fellow-sufferer no longer retain a fellow-feeling with our pain? Does any pang rend a brother's heart in which the Man of Sorrows takes no part? "His is love beyond a brother's; oh, how he loves!" Yet it is he who utters these words, "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad."

Let us turn aside to see this great sight. If we rightly search, we shall discover that this, like all other scriptures, testifies of Christ, and testifies specifically that in all his words and ways he is love. He came not to condemn the world, but to save: now, as well as at other times, he is about the Father's business. "Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face." Trust him even before you comprehend his dealings, and you will soon be able to comprehend the dealings of him whom you trust.

Bethany lay on the slope of Olivet, near Jerusalem, but out of sight. It was the home of Lazarus and his sisters. In their house the Lord and his disciples frequently sought retirement from the bustle of the neighbouring city. He was always welcome there; and thither, therefore, he often went. He is the same in character and tendency yesterday, to-day, and for ever: he haunts the house or the heart where a welcome always waits him. His word of promise still is, "If any man open, I will come in."

The Lord, having retired before a furious persecution, was tarrying, till the storm should blow out, in a secret place beyond Jordan. While he was absent, Lazarus fell sick and died. There was grief in the bereaved family, and grief throughout the circle of sympathizing neighbours, and grief among the disciples of the Lord as they were hiding with their Master beyond Jordan; for to that desert place the sad intelligence soon penetrated. All grieved for the death of Lazarus except the dead man's truest, deepest friend: "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad," said the man Christ Jesus.

Yet he, too, grieved over the solemn event: witness his tears when he reached the grave. But his grief was mingled with gladness: in his heart there was room for both emotions. The grief belonged to the Brother born for our adversity: the gladness, to the omniscient God, who sees the end from the beginning, and overrules all events for the promotion of his kingdom. In the tears by the grave at Bethany behold the Man; in the glad-

ness beyond Jordan behold the Ruler in providence, God over all.

Some principles of tender interest and beneficent operation lie slumbering in this text. Let us draw near and gently awaken them, that we may mark their beauty as they rise, and apply them for profit to our own experience.

As a preacher, Paul announced his determination to know nothing among his audience but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In his official capacity he recognized only two themes, and all his preaching consisted of a balanced alternation between them. Nor were Paul's discourses wearisome for lack of variety. If a teacher of natural science were to announce that he intended to limit himself in his prelections to the heavens and the earth, you would be under no apprehension that his material would run short before the session should close. Thus Christ's glorious person and Christ's atoning death together afford ample field for all the energies of the greatest ministry ever given to the Church. Who the Redeemer is, and what he has done for men, occupied Paul from the day of his conversion to the day of his departing. It is our part humbly to follow the great apostle's steps.

Learners may find suitable patterns in the Scriptures as well as teachers. "Sir, we would see Jesus," said some devout Greeks, who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. Those beautiful, but dark and cold globes, were drawn from their distant orbits by an impalpable but

irresistible influence toward the Light of the world. Sir, we would fain see Jesus, is the true though inarticulate desire of the little ones—the poor in spirit still—when they meet with any one who has skill to expound the gospel. Follow those Greek strangers as they press in past apostles and evangelists, and creep near to Christ himself. Or, if the example seem to suit you better, go to the spot where yonder bent and wan-faced woman presses through the crowd of Christ's fair-weather admirers, and presses in to Christ himself, that she may touch the hem of his garment; go in her wake, through all attendants and all ordinances,—go in secret, with a throbbing heart, behind that humble, earnest woman, and touch him as she touched him. Some of the answer that Jesus gave her, as cold waters to a thirsty soul,—some of the answer destined for her will overflow and drop on your parched tongue, as you stand by her side: "Go in peace; thy faith hath saved thee." To-day let us come to Jesus; let us take our stance near; let us look and listen.

1. The first and fundamental lesson that lies in the text is the sympathy of Christ with his people—somewhat analogous to the sympathy that circulates through the several organs of one living frame. Such is the vital union, that every wound inflicted on the members pierces with pain the Head. What a perennial well-spring of blessed consolation was opened for believers, for example, in the cry that Saul's meditated stroke upon the defenceless disciples at Damascus drew from the lips of their

risen Defender in the heavens: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

The Son of God has been pleased to place himself in sympathetic relation with humanity. He has taken to himself the seed of Abraham. He has so joined himself to our nature, that its sorrows run through his being and rend his heart. Of set purpose, with full knowledge and with infinite willingness, he has committed himself to this condition. He has entered the circle and must experience every shock that springs in any portion of the vast circumference.

It was he who sent the message to Israel in Egypt: "I know their sorrows." In the desert place beyond Jordan he knew, he felt the grief that was rending the household at Bethany. Out from the circle of sympathy he could not and would not go. Christ's relation to humanity is a fixed thing. On its changeless perpetuity our hope depends. "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

By a message from the sisters, Jesus and his disciples had learned that Lazarus was sick; but the Head, being in closer communion with the member, had secret and later intelligence. In their solitude, Jesus said to the disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth;" and that sleep was death. The dying throb of Lazarus beat also in the heart of Jesus. In all their afflictions he was afflicted.

His promise runs, "Lo, I am with you alway,"—all the days,—the dark days of pain as well as the bright days of joy. When the strain of temptation is raised to its

highest pitch,—Satan desiring to have you that he may sift you as wheat and blow you away like chaff,—he is at your right hand, so that you shall not be greatly moved. True disciples still are often more frightened than hurt by the storm that rages around them, like Peter when he thought he was about to sink in the sea. Faith's grand old formula, "I will not fear, for thou art with me," would still suffice to make smooth every rough place of a Christian's faith, and straight every crooked one.

2. The Lord Jesus, possessing all power in heaven and on earth, hears the cry of his people and sends them help. He intimates, indeed, that, in a sense, he puts himself in their power, and cannot resist their plea. It is obviously implied in the narrative here that if he had been present in the sick-chamber at Bethany,—present beholding the tears and listening to the prayers of the sorrowing sisters,—he would have cured the disease and preserved the life of Lazarus. Martha was right when she said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." He cannot endure to hear the prayer of his people, and permanently to deny their request.

Hence he could not remain long in visible presence with his followers after his ministry and his miracles began. When he had made his power known, they naturally began to look for his help in every calamity; and they did not look in vain. But the continuation and extension of the method would be inconsistent with his purpose and his laws. It soon became expedient that he should go away. As on a limited sphere and for a

limited time he retired out of sight beyond Jordan, and permitted Lazarus during his absence to die, that he might afterwards reveal himself more effectually as the resurrection and the life; so he has on a larger sphere, and for a more protracted period, gone away, as it were, on the other side of Jordan, out of our sight, permitting multitudes of his friends to sicken and die, preparatory to a glorious resurrection. We get a glimpse through this opening into the heart of Jesus. In order that he might, for great purposes of his own, refuse the specific request of the sisters for the life of Lazarus, it was necessary that he should remain at a distance until Lazarus was dead. This is as much as to say that if he had been at hand he would not have permitted Lazarus to die; he would not have refused to comply with the request of the eager suppliants. He was not afraid to let them know that in presence of their tears and cries he could not refuse them.

3. Alike the Lord's actions and his emotions contemplate the profit of his people. If he remained distant while Lazarus was battling with death, it was for your sakes. If he rejoiced in the immediate issue of that unequal conflict, it was for your sakes. It is ill the part of Christians if their rule is not, whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, to do all to the glory of God; for whether he ate or drank, or whatsoever he did, he did all for the redemption of lost men. It was expedient for us that Christ should come into the world; therefore he came. It was expedient for us, in the

fulness of time, that he should go away from the world; therefore he went away. All things are for your sakes.

In this case, the particular profit which he desired and anticipated for his people was, that they might believe. The death of Lazarus afforded to him the opportunity of displaying his omnipotence, and thereby confirming the disciples' faith. But although this is the only benefit specified, others followed in its train. The discipline, for example, that the bereaved family endured was most precious, as a means of purging away their dross and preparing them for a holy rest.

Jesus was glad that he was not present at Bethany, because that would have implied the healing of Lazarus; and consequently the opportunity would, on that occasion, have been lacking of exerting his own omnipotence as the resurrection and the life. He loved his own mighty work, as well as his own atoning sacrifice. He rejoiced to break and bless and multiply the bread to a hungry multitude in a desert place. He rejoiced in healing the ten lepers, and missed the nine when one only returned with praise. He loved to have little ones in his arms, and reproved the ignorant disciples who sought to interdict their approach. When the children cried "Hosanna!" the hymn was sweet to his taste; and when some officious formalist said, "Master, rebuke them," he answered, "If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out." The raising of Lazarus was a work especially to the Redeemer's taste. He loved it,

and all that led to it. He delighted to be in foretaste, before the time, the resurrection and the life. As in feeding the hungry he enjoyed the act of being the bread of life to his own, so in raising the dead he rejoiced in being already life from the dead to those who had put their trust in him.

This was the deepest need, and consequently this was the greatest work which the Deliverer was called to perform, previous to his own resurrection. On other occasions he had healed the sick; resuscitated the dead daughter of Jairus, soon after she had expired; raised the son of the widow from the bier, as they were bearing the corpse to the grave. But Lazarus was already in the tomb; he had been dead four days; corruption had begun; dust was returning to dust. According to the measure of man's extremity is the greatness of God's opportunity. The Redeemer visibly exulted over this occasion for the manifestation of his saving power: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." He anticipated in this his greatest work a surer foothold for his beloved people, in their struggle to hold fast by faith. He expected that this mighty work would, in point of fact, afford to feeble disciples a larger handle to grasp by, that they might not, in some future tempest of temptation, be shaken off, and fall away.

Joy and sorrow rose and fell in Messiah's breast as he foresaw a benefit or feared a harm to the faith of his people. He careth for us. Oh, how he loves!

Application.—1. The lesson bears on the ordinary affairs of life. You make an effort in order to obtain a lawful object, and your effort is made in a lawful way. You greatly need success, you earnestly desire it, you strenuously toil for it; but your plans miscarry, and your poverty becomes deeper than it was before. The Lord reigns, and you are his. He has all power, and you are one of his redeemed people. Notwithstanding, your venture in trade is unsuccessful, and you are reduced to straits for daily bread. Your misfortunes do not prove that your Saviour lacks the will or the power to help you. If he had been in visible, bodily presence at your side, and if you had looked up in his face, and told him, with tears, that it was the bread of your children that was lost, he would have put forth his power in your behalf. When the disciples have toiled all night and have taken nothing, his tender question is, "Children, have ye here any meat?" And when he learns that they are destitute, he directs them how to let down their net, and crowns their effort with a blessing. If, like those worn-out fishermen, you could with your bodily eyes descry the Lord on the shore in the early dawn, he would supply all your need. But he is not here. He has risen from the grave, and ascended into heaven. It is expedient for you that he is not in sight. If he had been here, such is his tenderness that he could not have refused material help; but he is glad for your sake that he was not here. From the height of his throne he sees beneath and around before and behind

your case. On his throne he is, without entangling complications, ordering all things for your highest good.

O son! O daughter of the Lord Almighty! it would be a light thing for Him who strewed the blue vault of heaven with stars, like gold dust on the bottom of a transparent river,—it would have been a light thing for him to give the child whom he loves a fortune, if he had seen that a fortune would be best for his child. He is glad, for your sakes, that at this point of your progress he is out of your sight, because he knows that the world on your side at this point would not be profitable for you.

I have often been puzzled by the course of events while I was among them; but I do not remember a case in which the view of the same events from a distant point did not say, "Be still, and know that I am God."

Suppose the son of the Queen were in this city, struggling in competition with other merchants—now incurring a loss, and then unable to take advantage of an opening for want of capital. Suppose the Sovereign were on the spot, and impelled by the imperious affections of nature to employ the national resources in favour of her child. In the supposed case, the Sovereign, if present, could hardly refrain from interference; but interference on her part would be highly inexpedient. Well might she be glad if she were out of the way. In some such way it pleases the reigning Redeemer to withdraw himself from his people, and to leave them struggling with misfortunes which his hand could in a

moment remove. You trust him with the redemption of the soul; trust him with the things needful for the body.

2. The lesson bears manifestly and directly on the bereavements which Christ's friends are called to sustain. The apple of your eye is touched. The blossom whence you fondly expected ripe fruit to grow, is blighted before your eyes. Convictions begin to penetrate, from time to time—sudden and sharp, like lightning flashes—convictions that the king of terrors has marked your treasure as his prey. An indescribable, hard, dry agony settles on your heart, like a stone pressing down and impeding its pulsation. You cannot take the conception distinctly in, and yet you are not able to keep it out.

You hold the pale hand, but you cannot detain the parting life. While you fondly grasp the casket, the jewel is leaking out below, like water; and you will soon have nothing in your arms but clay. You repeat the prayer that you learned to lisp in childhood, "Our Father which art in heaven." You plead in Christ's name for a submissive spirit; but in the tumult you cannot discern whether you are submissive or not. Ah, if Jesus were standing weeping by the bed, as he wept by the grave of Lazarus, your eye meeting his and his meeting yours, both dim with tears—if he were in this fashion here, your child would not die. Your piteous look would command him; he would grant your desire. But for your sake he remains out of sight. He is glad for your sake that he is not there as the controller of

nature and the preserver of life. In that capacity he has withdrawn himself, in order that he may more freely act as your wise and kind Redeemer. As from his throne he does for you all things well, he is glad that he is not at your hand for a miraculous cure. He is glad, for your sake, that in this sense he is beyond your reach.

I had a brother once. Each of us can best understand and express his own individual experience; but one voice here may awaken a thousand kindred echoes. Not more certainly does every blade of grass receive its own drop of dew, than every human life its own measure of sorrows. Like each other, too, are the various griefs that chequer life, as dew-drop is like to dew-drop; but every separate person knows his own separate grief. Jesus, the compassionate Saviour of sinners—Jesus, our elder brother in the heavens—looked down on this pair of brothers in their youth, and planned deeply, lovingly for both. He smote the elder brother with an ailment that slowly but surely sapped the roots of life, and imparted to the younger constant robust health. With this diversity of allotments, they were thrown close together for a series of years in their father's house. What fragments of boyish disagreements may have survived till that period, were at once by this discipline conclusively purged away. The weak and the strong reciprocally clasped each other, and coalesced into one, like a vine and an elm growing together on the same soil. Nothing now could sever the pair. Whom God had thus joined

by a special providential dealing, no wile of the devil could avail to put asunder.

In the furnace, and in the earliest and gentlest period of its heating, the sufferer was born to the Lord. He struggled in unseen depths a little while, and then emerged into light and liberty. His peace flowed like a river, and the righteousness he rested in became great like the waves of the sea. All that concerned him was gradually made perfect, and then he was removed to rest. This was, doubtless, best for him, and he knows it now. No question now, in regard to him, that the Lord did all things well. But what of the survivor? The stroke was love to him too, in another way. When the blow fell, the two lay so close together, that, whether dealt by the hand of God or the hand of man, it must needs fall on both. It fell on both accordingly, and blessed both by its fall. It blessed him, in exempting him altogether from the longer and rougher portion of the wilderness journey; and me, in hedging my way more closely in, so as to make the inevitable pilgrimage more safe to the pilgrim.

I remember the parting scene, down to its minutest feature, as freshly as I remember the events of yesterday; as we see a big star though it lie deep in heaven, while a lamp is invisible a few miles away. These hands held his pale brow, when at length its beating ceased. If Jesus had been there, as he was at the mouth of the cave in Bethany, in his visible presence and power as Lord over all—if Jesus had been there, my brother had not

died. He would have pitied me, and shielded my feeble head from the descending stroke. But Jesus is glad to-day that he was not there; and the saved sinner whom he then admitted into rest is doubtless glad too, for he was permitted to go early home.

The blow which separated us was delivered for our sakes, and perhaps both derived from it equal advantage. Thereby his pilgrimage was shortened, and mine was made more useful and more safe. It will be joyful if, on comparing notes at our next meeting, we discover that he got over with fewer scars, and that I, though wounded oft, get some companions with me, as a crown of joy and rejoicing.

From the moment that my brother's eyes were shut, the world's light seemed many shades dimmer than it had been before. I am not sure that the face of the earth ever afterwards for me recovered its original brightness. If its glitter had lasted, it might have possessed more power to entice me into its snares.

I met a mother lately whom I had known before, but of whom I had lost all trace during an interval of six years. In answer to my question about her children, she informed me that they were all taken away but the youngest. "And how have you been sustained under these sorrows?" She replied, "Every bereavement has knit me closer to Christ, and every child I have in heaven is another cord to hold me up."

This world is like a sea; it cannot rest. Life in the world is for Christians somewhat like a net as it floats

in the water. It is necessary that the net should lie, in its whole length and breadth, beneath the surface. The lower edge of the net must lie deep—must in ordinary cases, indeed, rest on the bottom. But that being once secured, the more straight that it stands on its edge the better. To secure both objects—to keep the lower edge always on the bottom, and the upper edge always at the surface of the water—two different and opposite contrivances are simultaneously applied. To keep the net down, heavy stones are attached at short intervals on one side; and to bear it up, corks or bladders are attached at similar intervals to the other. Thus it is kept standing upright in the water, one edge on the ground, and the other, if not above the surface, yet always straining and pointing towards the upper air.

Thus stand Christians in the tide of Time, as it sweeps with varied velocity past them and through them. On the one side they are kept close to the earth by a multitude of needful weights,—and they are on that account all the more useful; on the other side, if not taken out of life, yet kept always pointing and tending to its upper edge—the edge of earth that lies nearest heaven—held erect and drawn upwards by many small invisible lines, attached to some bright and buoyant things, which have escaped from their grasp and leaped through the water into the upper sky. Let go one of those buoyants even from the bottom, and it bounds sheer up to the surface. Lines are made fast to it as it rises—lines of many intertwining human loves—lines which many waters can-

not quench. That buoyant thing let go, yet linked to your heart, will contribute to keep one edge of your being at least pointing upward, while you must still remain for a time in the deep.

When a little one is taken up, suffer the little one to go at Christ's command, and yet continue to keep hold for your own profit. Of faith, hope, and love plait a threefold cord that shall not easily be broken, and therewith hold fast by the departed. Even that tiny thing, now that it is taken up, will contribute to keep you from lying all along upon the dust—will contribute to keep you erect in these troubled waters—will keep one side of your being pointing up to God your Saviour and heaven your home.

VIII.

The Source of Christian Love.

"*For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*"—PHILIPPIANS i. 8.

A PECULIAR tenderness breathes through this epistle. It glows all over with love. Other letters of Paul contain more of argument, of doctrine, of reproof; none so much of emotion flowing direct from heart to heart. Several circumstances conspired to impart to this letter its characteristic affection. His own position when he wrote it tended to soften and solemnize his spirit. He was at Rome, in the hands of a cruel despot. Already he was in prison, and he knew not the hour when he might be led forth to execution. The remembrance of his first visit to Philippi tended in the same direction. His work in that city was the first of his mission to Europe. He had endured great sufferings there, and also obtained great success. He had spent the night, bleeding from recent scourging, in the inner prison, with his limbs fixed in an instrument of torture. Yet from that prison he sang praise to God, and

came forth to witness a mighty work of conversion among the heathen. Besides all this, the Christians at Philippi had shown him great kindness in his time of need. They had followed his footsteps in his missionary journeys, and repeatedly relieved his necessities. Now their messenger, Epaphroditus, had found him out in his prison in Rome, and liberally supplied his wants. (See chap. iv. 10–18.)

It is much to be lamented that gifts of temporal good to spiritual instructors have often become the occasion of jealousy and strife. These contributions are in themselves natural, and are clearly sanctioned in the Scriptures. They are not in their own nature evil; they might, indeed, become the channels of spiritual benefit. They might be blessed to those who give and those who receive. The pure heart and the single eye are needed on both sides ere these contributions can become pleasant and profitable. But what relation of life does not need the pure heart and the single eye? When one gives and another receives spiritual things, and he who receives spiritual things contributes in turn of his temporal things, the intercourse is not necessarily carnal and secular. All things are yours when you are Christ's. Elevated, and pure, and profitable was all the intercourse between the apostle of the Gentiles and these the first Christians in Europe that were converted through his ministry.

Money is God's gift too. It may be given without a grudge, and accepted without degradation. If we ourselves are carnal, our handling of money will be carnal;

but such also will our handling of all other things be. "Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but to the pure all things are pure" (Titus i. 15).

It is worthy of notice, as we pass, that in this letter—written to acknowledge the receipt of contributions from the converts at Philippi—there is not a word about masses for the dead, or any other superstitions for which the popish priests receive pay. Paul never said a mass nor granted an indulgence. What is more, he never spoke or wrote a word against either of these corruptions; for this good reason, that he did not know them. They did not exist in his day, and he had not even a conception of their possibility. They did not once occur to his mind.

I. The witness of Paul's tender regard for the Philippians.

II. The source of it.

III. The character and strength of it.

I. *The witness:* "God is my witness."—I do not say it is necessary or expedient to parade this appeal frequently or on trivial occasions. The expression of it should be reserved for seasons of peculiar solemnity. Paul, on the verge of martyrdom, not expecting to see these brethren again until he should meet them at the great white throne, desiring to give them the most solemn assurance of his regard,—an assurance that might be their consolation when he was gone,—takes the name of God, not in vain, but in reverent truth, into his lips, and confirms

his testimony by his oath. It has been often remarked —and in the main the observation is just—that those who continually betake themselves to such an attestation in order to obtain belief are precisely the people who do not deserve to be believed, either with an oath or without it.

But though the parade of this witness should be spared, the inner consciousness of it should pervade all our intercourse, all our life: that God is witness of our words is a thing that should be very seldom on our lips, but should be always on our mind.

God is witness of all our affections toward all men. "There is not a thought upon my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. The darkness hideth not from thee."

It is easy to deceive a fellow-man; and, alas! because it can be done, it is often done. There is no outward restraint to prevent false representation. It is left to conscience within; and conscience, when often trampled on, grows callous, and ceases to resent the injury. Many a man, who does not suspect himself of being a hypocrite, habitually represents himself as better than he is.

It is healthful to the soul to be constantly reminded of another onlooker. God is not mocked. To go about the business and intercourse of life under the sense of God's presence, would cast out all the malice and envy from the heart, would banish all falsehood from the lips. He requireth truth in the inward parts. Give him what he demands. Keep the living God consciously near, the witness

of all your words and ways, did I say? It is easier said than done. This is precisely the company that most people shun. It is a law of nature that a man banishes from his presence and memory persons and objects that he does not like, until these persons and objects acquire an independent power, and force themselves under his notice whether he will or not. "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Here lies the secret. No man chooses the living God as his habitual company and witness unless he is reconciled unto God by the death of his Son. Hence peace with God, instead of lying at the further end of the Christian's course,—at the goal which by a life of effort he may hope at last to reach,—lies at the very outset of the pilgrim's path. This is the stile at the entrance. Not a step of advance can you make on the way of life without this. "Be ye reconciled unto God," is the first appeal of the ambassador from heaven when he opens his commission among men.

Paul in his solitary prison at Rome refers to God as the witness of what took place, as he might have referred to Silas for corroboration of what happened that night in the jail at Philippi. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace." "Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be greatly moved." God is this man's witness—witness of his thoughts and emotions, night and day: this thought is a pleasure to him, and not a pain. It is because he loves this company that he keeps it. So lordly and kingly a creature is man that he succeeds generally

in getting near those whom he loves, and keeping at a distance from those whom he loathes.

Brethren, what a blessed state to be in: would that we had reached it. To let all our affections and desires towards our brethren flow and reflow in the presence of the living God! To love and to dislike, to hope and to fear, to rejoice and to grieve, all in the light of his countenance!

All things are yours, and among them the holiness of God. One of the exclamations of a Christian is, "Our God is a consuming fire." That fire is his property, and it works for his good—it consumes the filthiness out of him. As the mists of night are driven away by the rising sun, the face of God chases away malice and envy, so that they cannot harbour in the heart.

II. *The source of his love for the brethren:* "In the bowels of Jesus Christ."—This form of expression occurs frequently in Scripture. Though strongly figurative, it is easily understood. It signifies strong compassion. Here it means the mercy, the tender thrilling pity, which the Lord Jesus felt, and feels, for his own in their need.

He longed after them in the compassion of Jesus Christ. From that fountain his own pity flowed. He was pitiful and tender because he was now in Christ Jesus, in whom pity and tenderness dwell with all the fulness of the Godhead. He was free to testify, "In me dwelleth no good thing;"—in me pity, compassionate love, had not its spring, its dwelling-place. True, Paul; for no pity flowed from your cruel heart, or dimmed your cruel

eye, when a gentle, loving nature suffered at your hand. When Stephen sank on his knees exhausted in body, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, strong in faith, there were no bowels and mercies moving in the iron breast of Saul; for Saul was not at that time in Christ—was not at that time a new creature. Although dew was falling out of heaven abundantly everywhere, that fleece had not caught a drop; and although the sight of Stephen's martyrdom wrung it hard, not one drop came. Long before this time, however, the dew of heaven had filled the fleece; and having freely received, it freely gave out a very flood of strong compassion.

Paul is sketching from the memory of his former self when he paints the frightful picture of the unrenewed: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus iii. 3). But when he was graffed into the true Vine, the life-sap from the Head flowed into the once withered branch—flowed through that once withered branch, the same that flowed in himself, the Vine.

A portion of the very love that glowed in the bosom of Jesus was communicated to his disciple. The affection towards the Philippians which was swelling now in the prisoner at Rome was a stream from the Fountain of love on high. According to his capacity and attainments—finite in measure and imperfect in kind, on account of defects in the earthen vessel—the love was still the love that glowed first in Christ.

It was not the love of mere nature, an instinct of the animal constitution. It was not the affection of party, or patriotism for those who were on his side or of his country.

His new position gave him a new view and new affections. He had risen with Christ, and was sitting with him in heavenly places. From that high place he looked abroad upon the world, and, lo, all old things had passed away—all things had become new. The old divisions between Jew and Gentile, Pharisee and Sadducee, had disappeared, and one line ran athwart the world, separating the human race into two compartments—those who were in Christ Jesus, and those who were not. Nor was even this line a divider between those whom he loved and those whom he did not love. He loved the whole; but a strange difference was perceptible between his regard for the brethren and his regard for those that were without. Over these he rejoices with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; for these his compassions flow.

Partakers of Christ, as far as their finite nature will permit, Christians partake also of his affections toward the Church on the one side, and the world on the other.

"The life that I now live in the flesh, it is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." With Christ, like Christ, in Christ, a Christian weeps when he looks down on an unbelieving Jerusalem; rejoices in spirit, and thanks the Father, when the wisdom which philosophers cannot discover is revealed unto babes.

It is not enough to be near him; we must be found in him. Almost Christian does not love its neighbour, and win the world to God. The disciples were near their Master, and thought themselves zealous in his cause, when they suggested that fire should descend from heaven and consume a city for lack of hospitality toward themselves. That was not an emotion drawn from the bowels of Jesus Christ. He, in reply, said, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." They knew not; but he knew. He did not recognize that thirst of vengeance as a grace of his Spirit. He did not say to them on that occasion, as he said to a humble, believing woman, "Who touched me? somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue hath gone out of me." That longing for fire to consume a neighbour did not go out of Jesus Christ.

This doctrine lies readily to hand for turning inward upon ourselves; and it is eminently searching: "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." These faculties of ours are talents which belong to the Lord. We are like the labourers keeping the vineyard for him. We have no right to permit any affections to flow through these channels that Christ will repudiate.

III. *The measure and manner of the apostle's fond desires after these Philippian Christians:* "How greatly I long after you all."—Already we have seen that he called God to witness regarding his desire after them. Learn from this that in order to get into communion with God

it is not necessary to banish your brother out of sight. These two are not antagonists. The law is, that he who loveth God love his brother also. He is a jealous God to the effect of commanding, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" but even in his own sight you may cherish to the full all your love of the brethren. The sun, at his rising, extinguishes all the stars of heaven, but not the flowers of earth. so when you get into the presence of God none other is permitted to stand on a level with himself, but into his presence you may boldly bring all your brethren of human kind. In his presence you may keep every affection that is inherited by nature or ingrafted by grace.

Observe now the extent and the distribution of his affection—"I long after you all." Probably they were not all alike attractive, either in person or character. If he had regarded them from a merely human and earthly viewpoint he would have held to some and despised others; but he had risen to heavenly places in Christ, and therefore his tenderness shone on them all. A lamp lighted on the top of a pillar casts light on some objects and a shadow on others, but the sun spreads day over all. The love that is grafted into Christ is universal, like his own. There is no respect of persons with God; and none with the godly, as far as they act in character.

"Long after you all." The longing was one, as it burned in Paul's heart; but it was many-coloured, doubtless, as it streamed upon a promiscuous congregation. Light is for all the same, but it becomes various as it

falls on various surfaces. "Long after you all"—that longing, as it fell on one, would be a desire that he might be born; and on another, that he might grow in grace.

"You all." The whole assembly flitted before the apostle. When he shut his eyes at night, and slept not, their faces would flit before him. One by one they came up, as well as in the great congregation.

1. *Little children.* His longing was a stream led off the compassion of Jesus. It was of the same kind. It did not overlook or despise the little ones; it rather singled out the children, and paid special regard to their case. That peculiar desire, here called "longing after," is more appropriate to infants than to others. In proportion as words are kept in, thoughts burn more keenly.

These helpless infants draw forth our longing more powerfully than grown people. In this respect Paul's paradox holds good, "When I am weak, then am I strong." In proportion to their weakness is the strength with which they draw you. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. This longing will send up many prayers for them now, and send out many warnings to them in coming years.

2. *The young who are of understanding age.* "Long after you." You have need of a compassion like Christ's. You must make your choice; and, alas! there are many things to cheat and entice you. You are floating on a stream. Its current sucks you down—insensibly, softly, but strongly down. If we stand on the bank and beckon and warn, we seem to you to be running quickly up, and

you wonder at our haste; whereas we are not running up,—it is you that are floating down.

We long after you, because you have fallen on an age of levity. Grave, godly ways, are little known. Life in earnest is a thing of the past, or a rarity, if it appears at all.

If a living creature were carried up into the atmosphere above the tops of the highest mountains, he would still be in the atmosphere, and yet it would be difficult to live. There would be nothing to hurt him. All would be clear and pure, and yet he would be ill. He would be ill, and not know what ailed him. He would pant for breath, although around, beneath, above him there was nothing but air. He would gasp, and die, for want of breath in an ocean of air,—because the air was too thin.

Soul-breath seems light and thin in this particular age, in this stratum of human history. Although there is an immense activity and volume of thought, thought is so light that a human soul pines and starves on it. We long for young people, afloat on this atmosphere rarefied and cold. Oh, for the solid, strong, spiritual life that our forefathers lived! Prayer, reading, self-examination, communion with God,—all seem attenuated in our age. And I do long after the young who launch on life at this period, dreading their leanness, their leanness.

But God is the same, though the spirit of the age varies. God's Word is grave, though human conversation be frivolous. Though the vain world is near, Jesus is nearer. "Whosoever will let him come."

3. "After you all." And among them the *burdened*,

crushed with cares. Oh, souls that cleave to the dust, there is much cause to long after you till you be quickened by the Spirit.

When gradually the soul has been cleaving,—the earth stealing marches on the soul and binding Samson while he slept,—the cure will not come as the ailment came, by slow, imperceptible degrees. The emancipation will be sudden, or not at all. I suspect there is no gradual emancipation for these slaves. It must be by an insurrection, by a sudden blow. "I will arise, and go to my Father."

4. We long after the *aged*, that they may have freshness of faith and love;—that their spirit may be like a little child, although the flesh refuses to come again so plump and tender; although the wrinkles will not out of the brow, that the twists may all be taken out of the spirit; and that they may in due time have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Longing after all, that the fruits of righteousness may abound, the backslidings be healed, the goings be established, and the glad new song be raised.

God is witness of all these longings; for as surely as they spring in a believer's heart they issue in two directions at once—upward to the Throne, and outward on the brethren; as a spring of water issuing from warm depths at once sends incense up to heaven and a stream along the ground.

IX.

"He Knew what was in Man."

"*He knew what was in man.*"—JOHN ii. 25.

THE idea of a physician, when complete and considered apart from human imperfections, contains these three things: he must know the patient's *constitution*, his *disease*, and his *cure*. He must understand, first, what was the nature and capacity of the subject originally, and before he was afflicted with disease; second, the ailment under which he labours; and, third, what will restore the diseased to health again.

When God became man, and dwelt among us, he came as a physician into an hospital, that he might cure the sick. Other aspects of Christ's character and work are also revealed in the Scriptures. He came to give liberty to the captive, sight to the blind, life to the dead. In these and in other capacities the Bible presents Christ, and believers receive him. Each representation has its own place, and accomplishes its own purpose; but at present, and in connection with this text, I am led to

think of him chiefly as a Physician. The Son of God came into our world to heal the diseased.

He took not on him the nature of angels; for either they had not fallen, or could not be raised. One portion of them had no disease, and another were incurable. Those did not need salvation, and to these it could not be given. He took not on him the nature of angels, who rank above us in the scale of creation; neither did he take the nature of creatures that rank below us, for there was no point of contact between them and the divine nature, —these had not been made in God's image, and though they remain the creatures of his hand, they could not be taken into union with his person. He took our nature. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. When Jesus stood amongst us as a man, he was not only "Jesus in the midst," between the lost and the saved of human kind, he was also "Jesus in the midst," as man between the creatures who never had been partakers of the divine nature, and creatures who had constantly retained or irretrievably lost it. To us is the word of this salvation sent. "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord:" heaven needs it not, and hell gets it not.

The fitness of our Physician lies in the divine perfection of his knowledge. "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. vii. 24, 25).

He who has undertaken our cause knows what was in man as he came from the Creator's hand; what is in man

since he by transgression fell; and what is needed to redeem and renew the lost.

I. He knows what was in man as he came at first from the Creator's hand. God made man upright; and that uprightness is known to Him on whom our help has been laid. The Son partook of the divine council in which the human constitution was planned,—"Let us make man in our own image." His delights were with the sons of men before they were called into being. By him were all things created, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth.

A secular philosophy in modern times, having observed that creation advances by steps from the lowest to the highest forms of organization and life, has concluded that therefore there is not a Creator!—has concluded that either God is not, or that he has not made himself known. I do not know what kind of a world this would have been if it had contained only clods, and trees, and men. As it is, it is much more beautiful, more useful, and more like God's work. Life rises by many steps, until it culminates in man. Worms, fishes, fowls, mammal quadrupeds mark the gradations and fill the intervals; and when at last the heir of the world is placed upon the stage, he finds servants of every grade ready to submit to his yoke. The Creator did not stop until he had reached his own ideal. When all things were ready, the purpose was expressed,—"Let us make man in our own image." The bodily structure was perfect, and into the now com-

pleted body he breathed a living soul. The body will not now be changed: it will become a spiritual body, but it will be the same body that shall inherit eternal life and inhabit a holy heaven.

There is no profit in raising a question whether He who made man could make him cease to be. That is of a piece with the question whether God could lie. It is enough that he will not, because he is unchangeably true. So when he has made a being immortal, he will not undo or annihilate the work of his hand. Made in God's image immortal, man cannot, cannot die.

God pronounced his work very good. In the human constitution the plan of the Omniscient was completed. This was a creature fit for being the child of God. This being could be taken into union with the divine nature. The measure of intelligence communicated to man was such, that when completely submissive and trustful, it gave the greatest glory to God, and the greatest happiness to the creature. The conception could not be improved; the execution could not be more skilful.

The Son of God knew what was in man, when man was made in God's image. He knew that the constitution of humanity admitted of complete communion with God, as a child in a father's bosom, and yet complete submission to God's will, as the creature of his hand.

II. He knew what was in man when he had fallen. Knowing the character of the perfect work, the Saviour knows also the amount of damage that it has sustained.

He knows, also, the gravity of man's sin, as an event affecting all the plans of God, and the government of all intelligent beings. As the defection of a chief carries away all that owned his sway, the fall of man affected the condition and prospects of the universal kingdom.

Some trees are of such a constitution that if the uppermost bud is once nipped off, the tree is finally ruined. It can never develop itself into its proper shape and dimensions. Such an uppermost bud was humanity on the whole material creation. Deprived of its head, the world could not shoot up into the beauty and completeness which its Maker intended it should attain.

That which the text ascribes to Jesus is an attribute of omniscience. This knowledge he possessed not as man, but as God. Man does not know what is in man. He cannot comprehend either the blessedness of his first estate, or the loss that he has sustained by sin. Precisely because we are in a low estate, we do not understand either its lowness, or the height from which we fell. Take an example that bears an analogy close enough for our present purpose. Suppose a man, through some accident or disease, has lost the use and the command of reason. The remnants of the faculty continue in a certain kind of activity, and throw off many wild dreams; but no two things hold together in the workings of that disordered mind. This man does not know either what he formerly possessed, or what he has lost. Because he has lost the command of reason, he cannot estimate what he has lost.

Now, although it is in the first instance mainly a moral derangement that has happened to humanity, it cannot be denied or concealed that the moral blight incidentally carries along with it an intellectual obtuseness. Who shall tell what advances might have been by this time made in mere knowledge, if the conscience had never been defiled by guilt? There is no branch of knowledge that man has failed in so much as the knowledge of himself. It is easier to find out the law of gravity that guides the spheres, than to find out the law in the members that wars against God, and against the right instincts that still make themselves felt among the roots of our being.

When one has been renewed in the spirit of his mind, —when, through the gospel, a sinful man has been reconciled, and admitted to God's favour again,—he obtains some glimpses both of his loss through sin and his gain in Christ. Those discoveries, however, that a renewed man makes in the secrets of his own nature are few and feeble compared with the knowledge that the Son of God possessed. The sin, in all its deformity, was open in his sight. The corruption was brought out, in full relief, against the light of his inherent holiness. He felt that the allegiance of man was broken, that his love of God and holiness had died out; and, instead, there had sprung up a distaste of God and an appetite for evil. Especially, instead of the child's loving trust, there was the suspicion and the terror of combined wickedness and weakness. The human heart was no longer the home of

the Spirit of God; the human life was no longer a track that marked on earth the holiness of heaven.

III. Knowing the original constitution and the subsequent disease of the patient, the Physician knew also what would restore him, and was able to apply the cure. Knowing the worth of man as God had made him, our Physician would not abandon the wreck; but knowing how complete the wreck was, he bowed his heavens and came down to save. He united himself to us, became bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, that he might raise us up. He so knit himself to his own on earth, that if he should rise, so must they.

When a sound and well-found ship goes to the relief of a wreck, and makes herself fast to the object of her care; —if she succeeds, well; but if not, she heaves off, and sees to her own safety. It was not thus that our Redeemer came to us in our low estate. He united himself to man. He threw himself into this wreck, so that if he should come away, he should bring the outcast with him.

I rejoice in the omniscience of the Holy One, on whom our help was laid, both on account of the good that he knew in man, and the evil. A counsellor who understood less fully what our nature was, and our constitution fitted us to become, might have advised abandonment. It often becomes a question of great importance in human affairs, whether a stranded ship should be left to her fate, or brought off and repaired. Sometimes an erroneous judgment is formed and acted on. On one

side, an effort is made to save the wreck, when it would have been better to abandon it, and construct another. Again, she is sometimes weakly abandoned, when it would have been profitable to have saved her.

I confess it is only in our view that this conception has place at all, regarding the purpose of the Saviour not to abandon fallen man, but to save. In the wisdom that is infinite, the end has been seen from the beginning, and there is never any period of doubt. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Yet we are permitted, from our own view-point, to scan the ways of God in the light of Scripture, and in the exercise of our own faculties. A helper who understood less of our original nature and capability might have proposed to cast us off as hopelessly damaged.

Some profound inquirers believe that they see marks of successive destructions and successive re-creations of life on the crust of our globe. Earlier races seem to have been wholly abandoned and engulfed. Afterwards, and above the debris, new organisms have been created to people the renovated earth. It is further noticed, that while the new species are similar to the extinct, there is over all a rise into higher styles of life. Now, one who did not perfectly know what man was in his creation, might naturally have supposed, that by allowing the wreck to be wholly washed away, a new and higher degree of intelligence might have been called into existence. But the Saviour knew what was in man, and therefore undertook to save him from going down

to the pit. He knew that already the work was perfect; that this work could not be annihilated, like earlier stages of creation, for God had now breathed into the creature a living soul. He knew, moreover, that no other and different being could be made, who should be more capable of enjoying God's favour, and showing forth God's praise. Thus, because he knew what was in man at first, he knew how to deal with him when he fell, —knew that it would be more for God's glory to redeem and sanctify the fallen, than to cast them away and create another race. Because of their worth unfallen, he will undertake the rescue.

And although he knew all the evil that was in them by sin, he did not disdain to undertake the rescue. Although, knowing the curse that lay on them and the corruption that was in them, he knew what was necessary to redeem and save, he yet said, "Save from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."

These, indeed, are the two elements that constitute the lost estate of man. The curse is on them, and the alienation is in them. The Healer, knowing the ailment, yet undertakes the cure on both its sides. He will remove both evils by becoming man and taking his people's place, that they, partakers again of the divine nature, may enjoy his place before God. By assuming the nature of the fallen, and meeting the law in their stead, he received the curse into himself; and in him it was exhausted. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The hand-writing that

was against us has been blotted out: it is nailed to his cross. He became sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

On the other side, the ailment was an indwelling enmity against God. This also he takes away by the blood of the cross. When we realize that in Christ God is reconciled to us, we become reconciled to God. These two can walk together now, for they are agreed. He is our peace.

Some lessons.— 1. Speaking now of the individual and of the unconverted: He knows what is in man, and yet he does not cast out the unclean. Lepers were not allowed to dwell among the people; but He who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, welcomes the leprous to his bosom. Nay, more; this Man receiveth sinners into a much more intimate relation. He ingrafts them into himself, like branches in the vine. It is true, indeed, that the nature of the strange vine is changed in the act of engrafting: but how changed? Changed by getting all its evil drunk up by the Good Vine. When Christ proclaims, "Whosoever will, let him come," he invites the leprous to be joined to his body as members, and cleanses them by receiving their sin and imparting to them his holiness.

2. Speaking now of his own disciples: he knows what is in them; and, with that knowledge, it is because he is God, and not man, that he does not shake them off. Even when a church of his, or a disciple, becomes to him

like water neither cold nor hot—a taste that is naturally and necessarily loathsome—he does not spue them out of his mouth. He does, indeed, hold that threat over them; but it is not in order to execute it—it is in order that it may never be executed. He who intends to cast out does not so proclaim his purpose. That purpose is proclaimed, that it may never be fulfilled. They are in that loathed condition. It is not conditional; it is an actual, indicated fact. But his casting them out is not a fact at all; it is a terror thrown out to stir the slothful into activity, the worldling into living faith. He hates putting away: his threat of putting away is his method of keeping closer in.

3. He knows what is in man, and therefore can make his word and providence suitable. All things are for your sakes. Some are piercing words—they make the children tremble; but ye that are the children, these words have awakened many slumberers who might not otherwise have been awakened—"Then shall he say, Depart from me, ye cursed." Some are tender and comforting—"Fear not, for I am with you." His providences, too, although for the time they may seem mysterious, all work together for our good. All power is given unto him, in heaven and in earth.

4. He knows what is in man—in each man—in the secret chambers of every heart. We do not know what is in each other. We could not afford that—we could not endure it. We could not endure that a stranger should search our thoughts; we could not afford to open

all to our nearest. If our thoughts were suddenly revealed—as through a glass in our breasts—to one another, there would be shame and confusion. This assembly would scatter like the congregation of Pharisees from the temple when Jesus said, "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone at her." But be of good cheer. Our neighbour does not know what is in us; our brother does not. The wife does not know what is in her husband; the husband does not know what is in his wife. It could not be. Life would be intolerable on these terms. One only knows what is in man: He knows it. To those who remain at enmity this is the terror of the Lord within them. But when we are at peace through the blood, it is the sweetest of all things to know that He knows what is in us.

Nothing that defileth shall enter heaven. Those who shall be admitted to the mansions of the Father must be pure, as he is pure. Here is ground of unspeakable fear. What if, after I have examined myself, and put away every evil that I have discovered, there should remain remnants of corruption that escaped my notice, and will keep the gate shut against me in that day? True, we may miss some corruptions in our search. We do not know what is in man—this man, this self. But it is not left to depend on the completeness of our search. One knows all. He knows what is in man—in this man. He knows everything that is defiling. He will not pass over any spot. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. He who has pledged himself to

make them pure and bring them home, knows all the plague-spots in his people.

Why should any disciple close any corner of his heart against Christ? He searches all the chambers for the evil spirits, to cast them out.

Sometimes one's life is placed in danger through poison; notably and chiefly through poison from the bite of a rabid dog. Great care is taken to draw the poison out; and after the utmost efforts have been applied, they cauterize and close the wound, hoping yet fearing,—hoping that the deadly poison may have been all taken out, but fearing lest some remnant may still remain in. From day to day, from week to week, the patient remains in agony, lest some microscopic atom of the evil may be still in the blood. What peace there would have been if an infallible physician had looked into the wound and applied the remedy!

Fear not, sin-poisoned but blood-redeemed soul. He knows what poison was injected into your being by sin: He knows—he saves—he saves to the uttermost. By dying, he destroyed death. He has taken that poison into his own heart—taken it all. There is now no condemnation.

X.

God known as a Refuge.

"*God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*"—PSALM xlviii. 3.

NEVER heard a more joyful song than this. From beginning to end it is one continuous outburst of triumphing praise. Of Saul, ere yet the new man within him was a day old, it was said, "Behold, he prayeth." The symptom indicated that life in its roots was at least begun; but here we have ranker growth and riper fruit. Listen: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God." Behold, he glorieth; and his glorying is good, for it is in the Lord. Those children of Zion were joyful in their King.

From this jubilant hymn we select for our lesson to-day a sentence in which all its essence seems to lie. The third verse is the key-note of the psalm; and such is the simplicity of its structure, that we may obtain all its meaning by the simplest examination of its words, without departing from the order in which they lie. Beginning with the primal idea which lies like a kernel

in the centre, we shall work our way outward to the circumference, analyzing in succession each fold of truth that has been wrapped around it. The layers, six in number, through which the analysis will pass, from the inmost heart to the outmost surface, are these :—

I. God.
II. God is.
III. God is known.
IV. God is known in her.
V. God is known in her palaces.
VI. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

The last is for us the crowning truth. It is the food on which a soul lives ; and all that lies beneath is like the root that nourishes or the stalk that bears it. The five that go before and lie within are related to the completed outmost utterance, as the earlier stages of bud and blossom and swelling germ are related to the ripened fruit. These earlier, inner stages, could not be wanted. If any one of them fail, the whole process becomes an abortion, and there is no profitable ultimate result ; but none of these preparatory developments can satisfy by itself and as an end. The bud, the blossom, the green germ, will not feed the hungry ; and yet if there be not the bud, the blossom, and the green germ, the hungry will not be fed : so, although the doctrines regarding the being and knowledge of God lie at the foundation of all saving truth, they cannot by themselves satisfy a soul. It is when the germs ripen at last into God a refuge for me, that I can eat and be filled.

In this exposition throughout I shall treat the psalm after the manner of the New Testament, as a typical revelation of Christ.

I. *God.*—The first germ of religion is the conception of God. A Being whom we call eternal, omnipotent, infinite—a Being greater than ourselves and our world—a Being who made us and our world,—this idea lies at the foundation of religious worship. By constitution, human creatures are capable of entertaining such conceptions, while other creatures within reach of our observation are not. It is because we were made at first in God's image, that we can image God again in our minds. If we had not in our creation been taken from that mould, we could not, even in imperfect and distorted forms, have reproduced it. God is a spirit; and only spiritual natures can worship. Even false worship argues a constitutional capacity for the true. The beasts that perish never fall into idolatry.

The conception of God is the greatest thing in man. In proportion as it is lost or distorted, human dignity decays, and the race sinks nearer the level of inferior creatures. The mould on which he was made is the cause of man's original greatness; but when he ceases to lay himself habitually back upon his origin, his being shrinks down again into the dimensions of a lower species. When the human mind has for many generations been unused to the elevation and expansion implied in the conception of God a spirit, it becomes

permanently contracted and incapable. How hard and long is the task of the missionary in a savage tribe, ere he get the opening into his pupil's soul stretched out again so wide as to admit the idea of the Supreme!

II. *God is.*—This is the first proposition in the inspired confession of faith: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is" (Heb. xi. 6). This is the pillar and ground of truth. Our idea of God depends on his existence, not his existence on our idea. Our conception is a ray of light thrown off from the fact: if the fact were not, the conception would not have been. The insect that lives and moves with many of its kind in a drop of water, knows not the being and attributes of the naturalist who is gazing down upon it through the tube of his microscope; but his existence and power are independent of its knowledge or ignorance. So God is, though some deny his being, and more misrepresent his character. The pit that yawns before a benighted traveller does not depend for its existence on his observation. If he see it in time, and turn, it is well for himself; but if he does not see it, his blindness does not make it cease to be. How plain is this truth; and yet how many miss it! An atheist may reason against the existence of God, and a worldly man may keep God out of all his thoughts, but neither the one nor the other can blot God out of being. Although we practically banish God out of our little spot of time, he will meet us when we enter his great eternity.

III. *God is known.*—It is instructive to observe Paul's method in reasoning with the Athenians regarding the altar which they had dedicated to the unknown God, and the cognate argument which he addressed to the idolaters at Lystra (Acts xvii. 22–29; xiv. 15–17). In both cases he appeals to the evidence of God's being and attributes which the visible creation displays. This is an inspired recognition of natural religion. The revelation which has been imprinted on earth and sky does not go far enough for the necessities of the fallen; but it is true as far as it goes. The record is authentic and clear. Men ought both to perceive its meaning and trust in its truth. It is only from the Bible that I can learn how my sin may be forgiven; but outside of the Bible I see evidence that God is.

The world over all its breadth bears the impress of its Maker's hand. The word that is spoken from heaven wakens a thousand echoes on earth. We are compassed about with a cloud of witnesses; but the clearest evidence is given by the still small voice that whispers within our own being.

God is, and he may be known; for he puts himself in our way at every turn of our path. The multitude ride forward on their own errands, like Balaam, noticing not the Angel who stands in the way. Those who pass through this world without the knowledge of God, will not be able, when they fall into his hands, to plead the excuse of ignorance. They are ignorant, because they do not like to know. "That which may be known of God

is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Not only out of his own mouth, but out of his own frame, the atheist will be condemned. In the organization of his body and the capacity of his mind, and the things of his conscience, he might have known God, if he would.

IV. *God is known in her.*—"God is known," may be taken as the motto of natural, "God is known in her," as the motto of revealed religion. It was in Jerusalem that the Highest placed his name and established his worship, in an age when nations and heathens were synonymous words. He who chose this Earth among the orbs of space as the habitation of his children and the theatre of his glorious work, with equal sovereignty chose Mount Zion from among the portions of the Earth's surface as the place where his truth should be deposited in early times, and whence it should spread over all at last. The grandest and best-known fact of ancient history is, that God was known in her as he was not known in other places or by other peoples. He chose the seed of Abraham to be custodiers of his truth: "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth." He trained them for his purpose by peculiar ordinances and a peculiar history. He fixed them to the spot by ties that all the revolutions of time have not been able to

break. He knit them together by bonds which, like the bush that Moses saw in the wilderness, have been burning these three thousand years, and have not yet been consumed. The place was chosen for the people, and the people wedded to the place, by the wisdom of the Omniscient.

In an important sense Palestine lay in the midst of the ancient world, and the kingdom of Israel in the midst of human history. Between the ancient civilization of the East and the brighter Western light that shone later in life's long day,—in contact with the multitudinous and ancient East on the one side, and with the new worlds that sprang into view successively in the Roman Empire and in the modern solidarity of civilized nations on the other,—Jerusalem occupied the very centre of God's work and ways. In her the Word was deposited, that from her it might spread; in her God was known, that by her he might be made known to the nations of the earth.

It is probable that a great destiny is yet in store for Jerusalem. The sin of its people was indeed like scarlet when they crucified the Holy One and the Just; but through the blood that their hands shed their guilt may be taken away. When God's judgments have been sufficiently made known by the wanderings of weary Israel through all lands, Jerusalem may yet again become a praise in the earth. She has long been trodden down of the Gentiles. Nations sunk in similar but rival superstitions contend among her ruins, but not for truth. They

fight for the sepulchre where the Lord once lay, while they crucify the Saviour afresh, and put him again to an open shame. Oh, foolish Greeks and Latins! who hath bewitched you, that ye seek the living among the dead? He is not there; he has risen. To them that look for him he shall appear; but he will not reveal himself to them that seek for the print of his foot on the ground of Palestine, or the old nails of his cross in monastic repositories, as if these were their saviours. As the lightning shineth from one end of heaven to another, so shall the coming of the Son of man be.

But here we must not circumscribe the lesson within the limits of the past. From the seed sown in Palestine an increase of many hundredfold has sprung, to replenish the earth with plenty. Forth from the Temple a small stream trickled, detected by Ezekiel's keen prophetic eye; but the river grew as it flowed, until it has become broad and deep like a sea. Jerusalem is now the church of the faithful on earth, and will be the home of the holy on high. There was much knowledge of God in the old Jerusalem; there is more in the Jerusalem that now is, the spiritual family of Abraham; and there will be most in the new Jerusalem. In her God will be known in full. There shall be no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in her, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof.

Wherever Christ is admitted King into a believing heart, there are the thrones of the house of David, there the temple stands, and thence sweet incense rises morn-

ing and evening to Heaven. Wherever many such believers are congregated, there is the city of the great King: whether it be in the heart of the metropolis or in a Highland glen; whether it be in this favoured island or on the Western Continent; whether under our northern skies or under the sun of India,—wherever there are believing men and women, there is a peopled Jerusalem; and of that city it is the distinction still, that God is known in her.

V. *God is known in her palaces.*—The psalm commemorates a revival in high places. The primary reference is probably to the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xvii.–xx.). When grace was poured into the heart of the king, all ranks felt the benefit. Like rain on mountain-tops, it refreshed first the lofty summits on which it fell, and afterwards the plains that lay at their base.

The poor are precious in God's sight. To them the gospel was preached by the Messenger of the Covenant himself; and to this fact he pointed as the distinctive feature of his ministry. "The common people heard him gladly;" while the rulers, with rare exceptions, boasted of their unbelief. In the present day, too, the Spirit has been in a signal measure poured upon the poor. In some cities and districts where the lowest have been copiously refreshed, the upper classes have been left in a great measure unvisited. In some districts the cottages have been wet with dew, while over the neighbouring palaces the heavens have remained as brass, and

under them the earth has remained as iron. The dividing-line has sometimes been as sharply traced as the line between Gideon's fleece and the dryness of the surrounding soil. God is sovereign; he does not give an account of his ways. Yet there is with him no respect of persons. The rich are as precious in his sight as the poor, and no more. Probably during the last thirty years the scattered cases of conversion have been proportionally more numerous among the comfortable and educated classes. Not long ago, Christian patriots looked with undisguised dread on the masses. Perhaps the spiritual awakening of late years, bursting suddenly upon certain districts like thunder-storms, is intended by the Divine Administrator to restore the balance. When, by a long silent process of detailed acquisitions, either the earth below or the clouds above have acquired more than their own share of electricity, the equilibrium is restored, not by an equally gradual process on the other side, but by a grand and sudden outbreak, which makes not only man but also birds and beasts stand still with bated breath until it pass. If we could make our observations as accurately in spiritual as in natural meteorology, we might perhaps discover, that by bringing charged clouds over the lowliest portions of the people, and making them burst in blessings on the neediest heads, God over all is in his wonted way making even, by a sudden outpouring, the odds in spiritual attainment between class and class which had been growing during the currency of a generation.*

* This paragraph refers to the revival in 1860.

In the meantime, all that is genuine in the Christianity of the high places looks with unfeigned delight on the knowledge of God that is spreading among the poor. When the blessing falls like showers on the workman's cottage, the palace of the noble shares the benefit. The participation is reciprocal, as the plains receive the surplus of a shower that falls first upon the mountains, and the mountains are moistened in turn by the vapour that rises from the saturated plains. From a spiritually refreshed palace, a blessing oozes down to the cottage; and from the spiritually refreshed cottage the blessing rises and enters the palace gates. One of the joys of the redeemed in rest, I think, will be the discovery, made in the light of heaven, that in ways and measures before unsuspected, each had been used as a vessel to bear a blessing to all, and all to bear a blessing to each. While they will learn that all good has flowed from the Head, they will learn also, with a subordinate but keen and pure joy, that much of it has flowed through fellow-members.

In our great cities, not only many palaces, but many streets of palaces, rise and proudly point to heaven. We have greater wealth than Jerusalem ever knew. In her palaces, at the period to which the psalm refers, God was known. Is he known in ours to-day? This is the meaning of the text for us.

Here, as we lean on the Scripture for authority, let us endeavour to receive also from the Scripture our tone. We must, on the one hand, beware lest in morbid fretful-

ness we overstate the case; and, on the other, lest from lack of courage we understate it. Our palaces—both those that are used for business and those that are occupied as homes—are shut in by lofty walls from the view of passengers on the street; but they are open upwards to the eye of God. From above he looks into every room of the palatial dwelling, and on every desk of the palatial office. God is known in the palaces of our city. He knows them that are his; and they that are his know him. They are safe in his keeping. While they walk with him in white, neither the blandishments of a palace home, nor the tricks of a palace counting-house, will be able to defile their garments, or turn them into crooked paths.

But these are a little flock—how small, or how great, no man knoweth. The disciples once ventured to ask the Lord the question, "Are there few that be saved?" In reply, he said that few were entering by the narrow gate into eternal life. The answer proves two things: first, that there were still some outside; and, second, that the Lord Jesus wanted them to come in. Be it known, then, that when in the Lord's name we complain that few are coming, we mean, as he meant, to invite more.

In many palaces God is not known. The inhabitants worship another trinity—the devil, the world, and the flesh. Aloft the prince of the power of the air presides, and two subordinate strange gods guard on either side the palace gate—the world and the flesh, filthy lucre and filthy lust. One or other of these demigods mounts

guard on every one of the devil's captives. Here, on one side of the street, is a palace in which God is not known; for the love of money guards the gate, and bars the blessed knowledge out. The princes and princesses of this palace must make their choice between the two, for both portions they cannot have. No man can serve two masters; and, in particular, "ye cannot serve God and Mammon." But the palace on the other side of the street, which is not closed against the knowledge of God by avarice, may be closed as effectually by other and opposite lusts. In palaces not a few a wheel of variety is painfully driven round, with great velocity, that it may throw off and keep at bay all serious thought. Alas! more pains are taken to keep the Lord out of his temple than all the pain of his scourging would amount to, if he should come in and drive his rivals out.

Oh, ye princes! be wise: kiss the Son, lest he be angry. Oh, ye palaces of Edinburgh! lift up your gates, that the King of glory may come in.

When in this lesson I speak of princes and palaces, do not understand the terms in any private interpretation. They should not be limited to the few who are technically entitled to the name in our social system. The substance of the title belongs to all the educated and talented.

The human skull, where the material organ of thought resides, has been called the palace of the soul. The princely spirit that dwells beneath that stately dome counts and keeps the whole world its tributary. In a

princely way, this king of the creatures has caught and tamed the powers of nature, and yoked them to his chariot. At the door of that regal residence a Stranger stands and knocks. He pleads for admission, and refuses to go away. Hear his voice: "If any man open, I will come in." This is God our Saviour. When he is admitted, God will be known in that palace; for, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Christ in heaven will be no comfort in the end to those who shut the palace gate against him on the earth. Not Christ in heaven, but Christ in you, is the hope of glory.

VI. *God is known in her palaces for a refuge.*—The historic allusion in the psalm is obvious. Israel is praising God for deliverance from a threatened danger. The kings who had assembled with their armies to war against Jerusalem, no sooner came within sight of the city than they hasted away without striking a blow. God the Lord was their sun and shield. He was not only in the midst of Jerusalem, but also a wall of fire round about her.

Without further reference to the primary historic allusion, and using the psalm freely as the type of gospel grace, let us proceed at once to consider the bearing of the lesson upon ourselves. On this last point all that has gone before absolutely depends. The idea, the existence, the knowledge of God, whether among rich or poor, become for us all or nothing, according as we recognize him as our refuge, or fear him as our foe. Whether

they flee from God or to him, is the article of a standing or a falling Church—a living or a dying soul. They who do not know God as a refuge, do not know him at all.

No man does, no man can, run of his own free will into the arms of his enemy. As well might you expect the law of gravitation to be changed or suspended, as the law, enmity generates distance. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" The guilty conscience, apart from the hope of mercy, can no more come close to the Judge than a stone can swim on the surface of the sea. As long as God is and appears to the sinful a consuming fire, the sinful will remain distant from God. It is when a glimpse of his grace shines through, that the alienated heart is drawn in a new direction. When faith in its first germ—secret, like the beginnings of life—begins to see in God's bosom a shelter from God's wrath, forthwith the prodigal says, "I will arise and go to my Father"—forthwith he rises and goes. Clasped in the Father's fond embrace, wet with the Father's gushing tears, admitted into the Father's happy home, and seated at the Father's festal board, the prodigal at length *knows* his Father. Thus it is when a sinner knows God a refuge, that he first knows God at all.

We discover here the grand characteristic defect of unreal religion in all its forms and under all its disguises. It treats God as an enemy, and strives to make the best of a miserable lot. Springing in a conception, more or

less clear, that God is just, and that men are sinful, it puts forth all its efforts to conceal human guilt, or to diminish divine righteousness. Where the conscience is in any measure active, the life of the unreconciled is a constant and hopeless struggle to keep an almighty enemy at bay.

Brethren, the first thing in religion is to be reconciled to God. The gospel is the ministry of reconciliation. Christ came into the world as the Redeemer of sinners, and has ascended into heaven as our Intercessor with the Father. He is our peace; and mark, if he be not our peace with God, he is nothing to us. Christ never undertook to lighten by a little the stroke of a still angry God. He offers to make God and man friends out and out,—to take all the enmity away, and make the alienated meet where "perfect love casteth out fear." Nor does he bid you wait for this boon till the judgment is set and the books are opened. He offers all now.

God is love, and Christ is the way to the Father. Him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out. Whosoever will, let him come. He saves to the uttermost.

Ah! in these palaces, and in these low lanes too, both are alike; but we must touch one at a time. In these palaces people don't want such a refuge from such a danger. The plain truth is, when the manifold formalities and hypocrisies are torn off—the truth is, the dangers from which God is a refuge are the pleasures in which the unconverted luxuriate, and the refuge to which the gospel invites them is the dungeon which they loathe and

dread. The dangers are dangers, because they are loved; and the refuge does not shield, because it is loathed.

Go into a city palace where a numerous ministry conducts the government of a business under the direction of a regal head. Chief and subordinates alike are exposed to a strain of temptations, as if they stood up to the chin in a rapid river. Tell them a refuge is near and open. Invite them to run into it, and promise them safety there. What refuge? God in Christ. Lay your soul on Jesus' breast; his love will clasp you round, and shield you from all evil. But if these men are of the world, and strangers to repentance and faith, you are in effect bidding them thrust their naked hands into a flame. This gain is their god. These pleasures are the air they breathe. They don't want to be defended from that in which they live, and move, and have their being. Hence God is not known in the palaces of the worldly, because they will not flee to him as a refuge. To many an occupation and many a company they flee as a refuge from God, but never yet have they fled to God for a refuge from sin.

In an Egyptian palace next to regal, long, long ago, a stripling was assailed by a tempest of temptation greater than any that ever beat on our heads. Joseph, solicited to profitable sin by the woman whose property he was, seems to me like a noble vessel hanging on her anchor in the storm. Your eyes swim as you venture to throw a glance on the scene; you scarcely dare to look.

When you lose sight of the object for a moment in the spray, you expect that the next sight will be that of a dismal wreck. But no, the anchor holds. Ah, the anchor of his soul was fastened "sure and steadfast within the veil" before the storm came on. In that palace, by the slave if not by the prince, God was known for a refuge: "How can I do this great evil, and sin against God?" But mark, God was Joseph's friend. Joseph lay for shelter on the Redeemer's breast, and he could not bear to wound the loving breast whereon he lay. If the strain of that temptation had caught him while he was without God in the world, it would have carried him away.

It is sin already done that makes the sinner continue sinning. It is an evil conscience that keeps a man far from God. The disease is sin; the cure is pardon. When I am at peace with God through the death of his Son,—when seeing me in Christ he counts me no longer guilty, and seeing him in Christ I no longer know him hard,—then begins a filial trust, a faithful service. When God is my friend, I flee to him for help; and when he is my helper, I am more than conqueror. If, when temptations press me, I flee from them to God, I shall surely escape. For poor, blind, guilty, dying creatures, such as we are, there are only two ways open—we must either flee from God, or flee to him. To those no good can happen, to these no evil.

One thing is needful; and this is the meaning of a gospel ministry,—"Be ye reconciled to God." Make

him your refuge, and you will find the way is open, and the welcome prepared. Make him your refuge, and all things will work together for your good. When evil passions stir within, and evil men oppress without,—when conscience accuses, and death overshadows,—I am like a dove tossed with the tempest: but like a dove tossed on the tempest, I see an opening into the bosom of my Father,—thither I fly away to be at rest. Blessed is even the storm which drove the dove to its window. Blessed, in the end, will be the miscellaneous dangers and trials of life; for they shut the pilgrim up to the Refuge of his soul, and kept him cowering deep, deep, all his days, in God's loving-kindness, which is better than life.

XI.

Jesus is Risen.

"*And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy.*"
MATTHEW xxviii. 8.

JESUS died and was buried on the preparation, the day before the Sabbath. The darkness that covered all the land passed away before he died; but the darkness that hung on his disciples' hearts did not clear away till after he was risen. Their hope was buried with him in his grave; but it rose with him from the grave again. That Sabbath was a dark day for the followers of the Crucified. When the Sabbath and the week were ended, and the dawn of the first day approached, the two Marys set out together and climbed the hill to see the sepulchre. Mark, they did not expect to see Jesus, dead or living. They knew that the great stone covered the mouth of the cave; but they will go and look upon the place where the Lord lies. Love will not give an account of its ways. It is a great instinct that rules the life, and it will take its own course. To go and stand near the spot at dawn, when there will

be none to observe them, and look upon the stone and weep,—this is what these women will do, and nothing can keep them from it.

As they approached the spot, the earth shook. It was not an earthquake of the ordinary kind. It was a ministering angel that alighted on the earth, and made it shake in order to shake the stone away, that these two seekers might see that the tomb was empty.

The countenance of the angel was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. This bears close resemblance to the appearance of the Lord when he was transfigured on the mountain. I have observed that when princes appear in state, their attendants are arrayed in robes that are like their own. The glorious apparel of a prince's train is understood to shed lustre on the prince. All the angels of God worship him, and here a messenger going the errands of the Crucified is arrayed in a glory borrowed from his own.

The keepers—Roman soldiers—trembled; but the angel, passing them over unnoticed, said to the women, "Fear not YE, for I know that ye seek Jesus." Blessed word; and it holds good to-day. There is no fear to them that seek Jesus. Seek, and ye shall find. "Jesus which was crucified." Already in that word there was the beginning of hope. It was dawn on the hill in a double sense—"WAS crucified." The past tense already prepared the way for a more articulate message: "He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Redemption was now wrought; the next step in the eternal counsel is to get it proclaimed. Both at the first and the last points of Christ's life on earth angelic messengers are needed. His incarnation was a new thing in the world: it was God's visit to men. When it is made known on the earth, men will be employed to spread it over the earth; but there is a first promulgation of the fact, for which men are not competent. Angels brought down the tidings of his birth, and angels brought down the tidings of his resurrection; but when they reached the earth, the tidings spread from man to man, and will so spread until the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The message by the angel is given to women, and the women were directed to carry it to the disciples. When it reaches them, it will spread; for they have been trained, and will soon be commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Angels to the women on Calvary; the women to the twelve; the twelve to the world. So the fiery cross was carried from mountain-ridge to mountain-ridge; one bearer laying it down, and another taking it up, until it had summoned all the clan to the standard of the chief.

The false message which brought sin into the world and all our woe was given first to woman, and by her was communicated to the man. The resurrection of the Lord—the healing of that early death wound—was communicated in the same way. From an angel to woman, and from woman to man, and from man to the world

came *death*. From an evil angel, through the link of woman to mankind, the evil tidings spread and covered the earth. From a good angel to women, and from women to men, and from men to the world, came life—the life of the world.

Through woman came the Word, the Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us,—God's message and meaning to our race. And it pleased the Father also to employ woman to break the news of his resurrection to his disciples, and so supply apostles with the theme of their preaching,—and so supply apostles with the lever whereby they might raise a fallen world.

It is not much preaching that we get from angels' lips; but there is a little here, and that little very precious. The commission he brought and laid on the two Marys was, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;" and in order to prepare them for obeying, he said first to them, "Fear not ye." One who is overwhelmed in spirit by despair is not well fitted to run express on any mission: "A broken spirit who can bear?" You may have observed that when your heart was heavy your knees were feeble. The joy of the Lord is the strength for running the errands of the Lord. Accordingly the angel gave their spirits the cordial before he imposed the race upon their limbs.

Besides exhorting them not to fear, he gave them ground to bear their joy: "The Lord is not here; he is risen." The angel knew his part well, for the whole theory of missions is here. To invite the messenger first

near, that himself may know that the Lord is risen, and his own soul rejoice in the living Saviour,—this it is that will qualify him for going quickly to bring word to the disciples, or to the world, of the resurrection of Christ.

Mark how much the angel makes of the resurrection. In his theology, that is the article of a standing or a falling Church. It would appear that the words "Jesus is risen" are the first and the second and the third articles of the angelic creed. It is this that he imparts first of all to the women, in order to cheer their hearts and sustain them in their mission; then when he sends them away, the message he puts in their mouths is still the same thing: Tell his disciples that Jesus is risen.

To the end—as long as the preaching of the gospel lasts—all effective evangelization proceeds in this way. "The Lord is risen" is at once the hope that sustains the preacher's heart in secret, and dwells upon the preacher's lips in the great assembly. The resurrection of Christ is at once the tidings he proclaims, and the confidence for himself that enables him to proclaim it. As all the rivers run into the sea before our sight, precisely because all the rivers run out of the sea unseen in the mysteries of nature; so all the missionaries pour out the cry upon the world, "The Lord is risen," because for themselves in secret the resurrection of the Lord is the day-star arisen in their hearts.

"They did run to bring the disciples word." It was the word within them that impelled them to hasten. It

was the word in their heart that made them run with the word on their lips.

They were wound up ere they came to the sepulchre. Their spirits were on the utmost stretch of desire and love; but the angel's message was a mighty weight that set all the machinery of their being in motion. When these grave Oriental women turned down the hill in the direction of the city, they quickened their pace until, without a word to each other, they simultaneously broke into a race. The act was not ordinary: it would be accounted strange. I delight to see a meaning in their act; I delight to interpret its meaning to myself, placing it under the light of the completed gospel. I find in it much instruction and reproof.

For once,—and the variety may be useful,—instead of gathering our lessons from the words of the Lord and his witnesses, let us gather them to-day from the act of the two Marys on that Sabbath morning, as they left the empty tomb behind and made their way toward the city: "They did run to bring the disciples word."

I detect a grand key-note here. It is not only the message carefully learned and correctly told; it is not only the faithful witness-bearing, whatever danger may be incurred. Over and above all this, there is an eagerness, an enthusiasm, and a haste in bearing the message of redemption, which are in keeping with the case, and mark the conduct of true disciples in all places and at all times.

The King's business requireth haste. This is strictly

natural; it is a universal law. All great tidings travel quickly, whether they be glad or grievous. The velocity of great news is proverbial, and the manner of the race is mysterious. Before the telegraph was invented, great victories and great defeats travelled over continents and reached those most interested, in ways that have never been completely explained. Although we may not be able to point out the details in each case, we can indicate the general law. It is here: the tidings were very great; they were charged with life from the dead for the world; it was an instinct irrepressible in those who knew them to break into a run, in order to bear them soon to those whom they concerned.

When the tidings are great, and real, and felt, the message-bearer runs with them. When the women told the disciples, the disciples published them to the world; and the apostles did at their stage what the women did on theirs,—they ran with the news. Read the Acts of the Apostles. See the track of the Apostle of the Gentiles across the nations. It is like the track of the sun in the heavens,—he runs his race, and he runs it rejoicing.

There was a long blank in the middle ages. The message was lost, and the messengers did not run. There was no haste, for they had let go the King's great business, the resurrection-life of Christ. Instead of the angel's method, leading the seekers to the place where the Lord lay, to show it empty,—instead of fixing the spiritual sight on the Redeemer exalted, they contrived a show

which persuaded people they had still his body within their reach. They forgot his resurrection to die no more, and made a multitude of mimic sacrifices, pretending that each was the crucified body of the Lord in the hands of the priest and in the lips of the penitent. This was no such message as to compel people to run with. The Lord Jesus, who had been dead, now alive for evermore, —this is the burden of the Lord which the apostles bore, and the possession of which compelled them to bear it over all the earth. "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!"

There were some great heavings in Europe during those middle ages, and some great expeditions undertaken in the name of Christ. There was death, but not death's stillness. The Crusades were great impulses and great outgoings,—not one or two, but great armies went forth with a message to the dark regions of the East. But, ah, how different! They bore not the word that the Lord had risen: they bore fire and sword. "My kingdom," said Christ, "is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight." It was "of this world" the message that the crusaders bore.

The age was dark; the people were blind; they went off the line. Conceive the difference between an engine with its train shooting along the valley with its pillar of white cloud trailing behind to mark its path and speed, and the same engine, off the line, plunging and hissing in a morass. Such is the difference between the early disciples, who knew the living Lord, and lived themselves in

the Lord, and those carnal multitudes who with carnal weapons surged over Europe to place a dead Christ,—a name,—upon the throne of an earthly Jerusalem.

With this century the true tidings began again to be a burden of the Lord in the hearts of those who had heard the joyful sound. Carey, and Judson, and Martyn, and Brainerd, and many others, got visions of the empty sepulchre,—got knowledge that the Lord is risen,—got their own soul's life hidden in the risen Lord. Forthwith they are constrained to spread the news: they "will depart quickly from the sepulchre,"—they break into a run, and make way across the nations to tell that the Lord hath risen indeed.

There was a conflict. The night was annoyed at the dawn. The darkness raged and attempted to extinguish the light. Everywhere the contest raged. The civil authorities in India refused to allow the first missionaries to settle on the soil: the missionaries took refuge on Dutch territory, and thence conveyed their message to the continent. In the General Assembly of the Scottish Church at Edinburgh, men who officiated in the pulpit, but who had not discovered that the Lord is risen, demonstrated that the heathen were an interesting and contented people, and that it was wise to let them alone in their picturesque worship and innocent ways. Others arose and quickly left the sepulchre, having discovered that the Lord is risen: they went themselves, or if too old for that, stirred up others to go into all the world and publish the good tidings.

I know not any life, since the apostles' days, that more completely embodies the idea of *running* to bring word to the world that Christ has risen, than the life of William Burns. I knew him personally, when I was his fellow-student, soon after his own heart had taken in the tidings. I knew him in his ministry in Scotland. I stood beside him when he published the tidings to the Roman Catholics in Canada. I have heard of him when he penetrated into the very heart of China, to deposit his burden there. His life, from the day that he knew the risen Lord, was one *run* with the good tidings to the whole world; and now the breathless runner has completed his course, and been admitted into rest.

Some bright gleams are now clearing through the darkness,—some symptoms begin to appear that the runners have not run in vain. In some districts of India the fastenings of idolatry begin to give way. Glad news have been echoed back from the island of Madagascar. The government has deliberately and solemnly brought out the royal idols and cast them into the flames, and declared on the side of Christianity. In Africa and China also there are proofs that the missionaries have not run in vain. The Lord whom they serve will provide.

This haste is not limited in its outgoings to those who are far off, or who have a dark skin. The haste belongs to the heart that has the message. It cannot lie still.

In the wars of the Scottish clans, if the burning brand was brought by a panting messenger and laid down at a clansman's door, it was a point of honour and allegiance

that he should seize it and carry it on. It is thus with the bearing on of the word that Christ has risen. Run with it to them that are far off, and to them that are nigh.

There is need of haste in this business. Bring it quickly to the young, in order that their path through this world may be in the sunlight, and not in the gloom of night.

Bring it quickly to the old, that they may have peace in their latter end. Haste with the word "Christ has risen," to all, that the course of life may be happy, and the end of life safe.

The word means that Christ lives,—that he is in the eternal world: and the edge of it is very near us,—as near us now as the sea is near the margin of the land. The Lord is in that land,—is touching the life of this land. So that when his disciple thinks of being led over, it is "to depart and to be with Christ."

XII.

"I will Sing of Mercy and Judgment."

"*I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.*"
PSALM ci. 1.

THIS resolution indicates a hopeful and happy state of mind. A song is the natural channel for the outflow of gladness. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." From a heart full of happiness this song flows, as a pure stream runs over the brim of a full well. He cannot hold in; his joy must have vent: "I will sing."

This is not a common singer; this is not a common song. There is something here which the world cannot give, which the world cannot take away. It will be profitable for us to study his character, and endeavour to follow his steps. His experience is supernatural and peculiar: none but the Holy Spirit could have led him through it; but what he was, every one of us through divine grace may be. Two things about this man's experience should give it a tender interest for us: first, it is very precious; and, second, we may reach it. Something

attainable may fail to interest us, if it is not of high value; something very valuable may fail to interest us, if it is unattainable. But here are both the blessings. This man enjoys a happiness on earth which is heaven already begun; and the path by which he reached it is equally open to ourselves. Those who have gone before us beckon us on. They seem to say, as Moses to Hobab, "Come with us, and we will do thee good."

The text presents to our notice these three: the Singer, the Listener, and the Song.

I. Who sings: David the king.

II. To whom he sings: "Unto thee, O Lord."

III. What he sings: "Of mercy and judgment."

I shall not speak at present of the first. It will be best illustrated by an examination of the other two. The character of the singer will be best ascertained by inquiring, first, to whom he sings; and, second, what he sings.

I. Consider, then, for a little, to whom this man sings: "*Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.*"—He turns to God when he sings: he sings when he turns to God. Conscious nearness to God, and exuberant joyfulness of spirit—these two have come together in the Psalmist. These two do not always go together: very often when they are brought near, they mutually destroy each other, like fire and water. Apart from regeneration and reconciling, you may have one of these two in human experience, but not both. In the multitude of his

thoughts within him, an unconverted man may be brought, and for a time kept, consciously near the Holy One; but then there are great sadness and grief in his heart: or an unconverted man may experience great joy; but then he has turned away from God. You may bring such a man to the Lord; but as long as he is there, he has no song: or you may give him a song; but while he is singing, he has put God out of all his thoughts. To turn to the Lord, and in that attitude to sing for joy, belongs to the children—to those who have been made nigh by the blood of Christ, and are accepted in the Beloved.

Constantly and necessarily as the laws of nature, the guilty, unforgiven, unreconciled keep God out of their thoughts, while they seek and enjoy their pleasure. As the night-flowering cactus waits till midnight ere it opens its blossom, and closes it again before the dawn, a carnal mind, being at enmity with God, never opens into real enjoyment until the whole thickness of the world intervenes as a veil to hide the face of God. "The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands" (Isa. v. 12). "My Lord delayeth his coming" (Matt. xxiv. 48).

This might supply a text for self-examination to those who really desire to discover whether they are disciples of Christ, or deceivers; or, being disciples, whether they are following the Lord fully, or sinfully conforming to the world. Look to your joys, recall the times and cir-

cumstances of your highest pleasure: in order to keep the pleasure up, was it necessary to banish the thought of God? If the memory of the Lord Jesus, his death and resurrection, his coming again to judge the world and to reign in righteousness,—if that memory comes in, does it drive away your joys as wind drives smoke away? Then you are either none of his, or, being his, you are crucifying him afresh. I do not say that it is inconsistent with a disciple's place to take hearty delight in common worldly good; but if it is a right joy for a member of Christ, Christ's incoming will not destroy it, will not diminish it. Your song is not a safe song, if by a sudden turning to the Lord it is choked in your lips. The fool saith in his heart, "No God;" and when he has thus cleared the space of his own heart—cleared it as far as his will is concerned—made it a world without a God,—then and there he invites a miscellaneous company, and begins to be merry: but when a knocking comes to the door, heard above all the revelry, and a message is sent in, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," all the gay thoughts vanish, the music is hushed, and the heart, so lately full of mirth, becomes still and damp as the grave. But the True One assures his own disciples, "Your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22). No one; neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come. This fire, when once kindled, like the lamp in the temple, will never go out. Many waters cannot quench it.

Take it on the other side. We have already seen that

a forgiven and reconciled man can afford to admit the presence of the Lord while he sings; and now let us see further, that when he turns to the Lord he can afford to sing. It is graven as with a pen of iron on the heart of the guilty, that to approach to God is terror and pain. This writing remains until it is blotted out in the blood of the Lamb. You may succeed in convincing a man's judgment that God is just, and deserves the homage of his intelligent creatures; you may persuade him at certain times to come near the great white throne, and lift up his eyes towards the Holy One; but all the time, if he does not know the gospel, he counts the coming a penance, and never breathes freely till it is over. He may periodically return with his prayer; but he never enjoys the coming: he rather submits to come at certain seasons, that he may more fully enjoy other company and other occupations.

In this text we are on the footsteps of the flock. This man, too, is religious: he draws near to God, not to endure the penance of periodic sadness in order to secure a license for carnal mirth; he draws near to God that he may escape from his sadness, and taste for a moment here in the body those pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. Said Jesus to his disciples once, "Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." He promises them another visit, in order that thereby he may dispel their grief, and fill them with joy. At another time, it is recorded that when, after a period of absence, he re-

turned, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

Brethren, it is a real and not a rare experience, to fall into the habit of running to the Lord for relief and joy. Here, again, is a test whereby one might conveniently examine himself whether he be in the faith, or, being in it, is living like his name and his place. It is a great turning-point when, instead of dutifully turning to the Lord in prayer, although the exercise throw a fear and dread over your spirit, you begin to seek the Lord in prayer, whether in season or out of season, as you seek the well-spring when you are thirsty, whether it be the meal hour or not, for the delight of refreshing your soul with the living water. It is one thing to go to the Lord dutifully, although the act is painful; and another thing to go to the Lord, as in compliance with an appetite, because going makes you glad. "Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

There lies a lesson here, too, regarding our singing, in a more literal sense. It is good to have tasteful, skilful music, in our public worship; but something more is needed. Singing and the psalm constitute the body of our praise; but the body without the soul is dead. And the soul that gives the body life is this same singing to the Lord; the opening of the soul in gladness to the Lord—gladness because we have the Lord to open to, like flowers opening to the morning sun. The outgoing of the soul to the Saviour, in the act of singing psalms, is the essence of the offering. Many touched

the Lord that day when the burdened woman pressed in until she reached him. The multitude thronged and pressed him; but only the touch of that poor woman penetrated to his heart, and brought back healing as the answer. Her touch had a soul in it; whereas the pressing of the crowd, notwithstanding all their hosannas, was but a body dead. Our united praise is a sweet and precious privilege; but let us beware lest its life ooze out, and only a dead body be left in our hands. Under the folds of our song, let our souls in secret go out and up into His temple—let our souls thirst, and draw living water from its fountain in himself. He will be delighted, for he counts it more blessed to give than to receive. And even our singing will be stronger and more general, as the living soul puts vigour into the body that clothes it.

II. The psalm that he sung. It is a psalm about "*mercy and judgment.*"—These are the two sides of the divine character, as it is revealed by God, and apprehended by men. They are the two attributes which lie over against each other, for conflict or in harmony, according to the conditions in which they are exercised, or the point from which they are viewed. They intimate that God is merciful, and that God is just. On the one hand, both these attributes are ascribed to him throughout the Scriptures; and on the other hand, both are more or less clearly mirrored in the human conscience. Most men stand too little in awe of his justice, and obtain but feeble glimmers of hope in his mercy; yet a

conception both of mercy and justice as attributes of God seems innate and universal in humanity. Assuming generally a knowledge of what these two attributes are, I shall offer no illustration of their nature, but rather proceed to notice how they stand related in David's psalm. The subject of the song is not one or the other, but both united. Their nature, as manifested to men, is essentially determined by their union. Neither mercy nor justice alone and apart could become the theme of praise in the lips of men. We could not sing them separately.

Suppose divine justice were taken by itself and presented to the creature. Beings perfect in holiness might sing it; but the sinful could take no part in the chorus. The unfallen who stand round the throne may say, "I will sing of justice: to thee, O Lord, will I sing." But the sinful who are outcast could not rejoice in God's justice. The devils believe in it, and tremble. Men in the body, who have sinned, can sing of justice, only because there is mercy to meet it still.

Some people very ignorantly wonder and complain that their children or neighbours should be thrown into a state of profound alarm by a conviction of sin and an apprehension of judgment. Ah, if they had for one hour the conception on their minds of God's justice waiting to meet them, without a glimpse of mercy, their wonder would be turned all the other way. They would wonder that either themselves or others could ever have permitted a day of mercy to pass unheeded, lest the next

morning's dawn should bring a sentence, "Depart from me."

But turn now to the other side. You think, if guilty creatures could not sing of justice, they could gladly sing of mercy if it should appear dissociated from justice. No; mercy could no more constitute the theme of a song for human beings than justice. When we sing of mercy intelligently, we sing of it as it rests on righteousness. But mercy apart from righteousness, I do not say could not be satisfactory, for it could not even be. Mercy that should override justice, would overthrow mercy too. If the superstructure could and should bend down, and draw out the foundation, itself would instantly fall. It is because of its foundation in righteousness that we can sing of mercy. A God that should offer mercy to sinners, without honour to his justice, could neither give them happiness nor heaven. A human heart with sin uncondemned within it, would be a cage of unclean birds; and a heaven with sinners unrenewed admitted, would be a cage of unclean birds too. Both the heaven and its inhabitants would be wretched.

A song cannot be constructed out of justice or mercy separately. Neither can they become the subjects of praise, if they meet in mere conflict to neutralize or destroy each other. It is not that God is less just because he is also merciful, and less merciful because he has undertaken to be just. When these two meet in the eternal covenant, they kiss each other. Justice is greater because mercy meets it: mercy is greater because jus-

tice is satisfied and assents. Justice is made more just because mercy keeps it company: mercy becomes more merciful in presence of a righteousness that never bends. They so meet as to support each other. Isaiah proclaimed Jehovah a just God and a Saviour: David sang of mercy and judgment.

But this union takes place in Christ crucified. In him the promises of God are yea and amen. Had Christ not covenanted from the beginning, and come in the fulness of time, the justice must have been poured out on the same persons for whom the mercy was needed. In that case, mercy, though it lived in God, could have had no exercise toward the sinful. Justice would have swept all the fallen away; and when Mercy issued forth, she would have soared over the waters like Noah's dove, and, finding no rest for the sole of her foot, would have returned on weary wing to the ark again. Mercy, although it went forth upon the world after justice had done its work, would never have found an object. It would have been as if a flood, with no ark floating on its waters, had covered the world. After the flood, it would have been in vain to send an ark for saving. By that time all were dead, and the ark would come home without a tenant.

In Christ the process is reversed. It is first the ark, and then the flood. You have mercy to sing of first, and judgment following. The flood devoured only those who refused to enter the ark. You have a picture of these two in their order in Ezekiel ix. First, the priest

with the linen ephod, to mark all who are on the Lord's side; and the destroyers are commanded to go after him, and slay.

But how can mercy come first with the free offer, since all have sinned and come under condemnation? Because man in the person of the Redeemer has already met and satisfied justice. The Substitute has borne our sin. Justice is satisfied, and mercy has free course (Rom. iii. 24–26). In him mercy and justice meet. Christ is the unspeakable gift: God is love. Christ was sacrificed for sin: God is righteous. Now his mercy has found a way to flow on the guilty. The design and effect of the sacrifice of Christ is, that God may be just, and the justifier of him who believeth on Jesus.

Brethren, we do not reach our hope by a process of reasoning. It is by revelation; and that, too, by the revelation of a fact. We do not work our way to hope by a series of laborious efforts. It is one fact, and it may become ours in a moment. A divine Substitute has taken our place to bear sin; and we are invited to enter on his right, and become God's dear children. We escape from the curse, because Christ our Substitute bore it in our stead. The law demands blood; and if it did not make and exact the demand, it would no longer be law; and if there were not law in the universe, God's righteousness would be dishonoured, and his throne overturned. The law demands blood; but God's Israel in every age go in beneath the blood of the Lamb, and when the judgment comes, the destroying angel sees the

blood of the Lamb, and passes over those who shelter under it. We are saved, because Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.

It is a song that is needed now, this song to the Lord —a song about mercy and judgment, from the ranks of the redeemed. For their own comfort this is needed; for the honour of God, and as a witness to the world.

When Moses and Israel had experienced in union the mercy and judgment of God,—when the sea had opened to let them through, and closed upon the pursuing enemy,—then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord: "Sing unto the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously!" If you had been there and had asked Moses, "Have you reached the promised land, that you are so jubilant?" he would have answered, "No; we are in the wilderness. All its breadth lies between us and rest. We must now begin our marchings and our fightings. But we are free; we are rescued from bondage, and cannot be enslaved again. Therefore we praise our Deliverer, and we praise him now. This is the time and the place for our song." No thanks for singing when you get to heaven. Open in gladness to the Lord that bought you even now. When Joseph took his brothers into his own chamber, and was reconciled to them, there was a great weeping. It was a joy too deep to be expressed in laughter. It burst from pent-up hearts in a great flood of tears. It was a great and exuberant joyfulness. From the inner chamber the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh, though they stood

in the outer court, heard the weeping. The tears of joy were common to Joseph and the brothers whom he forgave and accepted; but doubtless their joy in being forgiven was mingled with a tender grief for their own past sins. Thus, too, when the redeemed now rejoice with Christ, a vein of sadness runs through their joy, not lessening but enhancing its happiness, because themselves had crucified the Lord. It is meet that the song of redemption should be raised here, and meet that the surrounding world should hear our song, as Pharaoh's house heard the weeping when Joseph was reconciled to his brothers. There is a sense, true though subordinate, in which the disciples of the Lord now are enabled to sing to him of mercy and judgment. They endure affliction like other men. But faith turns the suffering even into joy. It is the wont of their Lord to give unto them that mourn in Zion beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. When their cup is full, they give thanks. When chastening comes, they still give thanks. They do not look on the one dealing as their Lord's kindness, and the other as his neglect. They count all love, and love him in return. The rod is but love's instrument, and all works together for good.

Once more mercy and judgment come very near each other, and once more the redeemed weave both into the texture of the song. But the veil still hangs over that last meeting. Ear hath not heard yet the psalm that the saved sing unto the Lord, after that final union of tender

love and righteous judgment. With bated breath we speak of it; and yet it should not be passed altogether in silence. "Come, ye blessed;"—behold the last gleam of mercy, at the winding up of redemption: and hark the judgment that sharply follows it,—"Depart from me." There is perhaps not a sadder scene exhibited in Scripture than the parable of the virgins at its close. There we hear only the wailing, because it is the scene outside of the shut door that lies within our view; but within there is a glad song. They sing of mercy and judgment when the door is shut. Unto thee, O Lord, do they sing.

XIII.

"Necessity is Laid upon Me."

"*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me.*"—1 CORINTHIANS ix. 16.

ALTHOUGH it seems a paradox, it is nevertheless certainly a truth, that in the Lord's service those work best who work under compulsion. Christ himself directs us to pray the Lord of the harvest that he would thrust out labourers into his harvest. In this strong-handed way have the greatest ministers of the gospel been seized and sent out. In the text Paul describes the constraint under which he laboured; and Luther, when, in similar circumstances, friends advised him to retire from danger, replied, "Here I stand; I cannot otherwise do. God help me." The peculiar force which was manifest in the ministry of those chief apostles was due to the divinely imposed necessity of working, which lay like a mountain over their hearts. Not the servants only, but the Head himself was subject to this law. In this matter Christ was made like unto his brethren. He acted throughout his ministry under

an irresistible compulsion: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Be it that his own spontaneous love laid the pressure on, the pressure was not on that account less commanding—the compulsion that brought the Son of God from the throne of heaven to the manger of Bethlehem and the cross of Calvary.

It is a ministry of necessity like this that Christ calls for, that the world needs, that a revived Church supplies to-day. We need not ministers that may or that will, but ministers that must preach the gospel. We need members not that may or that will, but that must live the gospel. Consider—

I. The Work: what they do.

II. The Motive: what compels them to do it.

I. *The Work: what they do.*—They preach the gospel. The terms point in the first instance, I confess, to the public ministry of the word by those who are relieved from other labours and set apart for that special service in the Church; but it is as certainly applicable to every Christian according to the measure of his gifts and opportunities. Among the disciples of Christ, responsibility in this matter is diversified not in kind, but only in degree. From the tallest tree of the forest down to the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, vegetable life is of one common character, and is subject to essentially the same conditions of life and growth. In like manner, all specimens of the spiritual life are subject to substantially the same laws.

In the Christian Church there is no privileged order of priesthood. The regenerated are one family. All are in one point of view children, and in another priests. One is our Master, and no man is lord over us. With this liberty the Lord has made us free. But every privilege carries a duty in its bosom. If we claim the high privilege, we must volunteer for work. By two short links every believer is scripturally bound to minister for the Lord. "Let him that heareth say, Come." We have heard the word of life, and therefore we should speak it. We have received the blessing, therefore we should spread it. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

I confess that the first application of the text points to those on whom the Lord has bestowed gifts, and to whom the brethren have given leisure. If a thousand ministers were assembled to-day in this place, and I were called to speak to them, I would, as God might enable me, urge them to be wise in winning souls. I would especially endeavour to open the fountain of redeeming love on high, and permit it so to stream upon their hearts, that its mighty volume might carry all their life before it, and compel them to lay out their energies in the service of the Lord that bought them. To them and to myself I would preach the gospel as one that must give an account. But as I have not such an audience,—as I have, by the special providence of God, an assembly of private persons, I turn towards them that side of the word that belongs to them, and press it home with all my might on you.

And are we all bound to propagate the gospel? Is there no ground on which one is entitled to claim exemption? Yes, there is one. If you have not received, you cannot be expected to give it. So, then, when some are sent by the King to enlist soldiers for his war, they may obtain exemption for one if they are able to report, —"He cannot make Christ known, for he does not know Christ." But, ah, what exemption is this?—without work indeed in Christ's cause, but also without Christ.

The Lord stands yet over against the treasury, and sees what every entrant casts in. If he condescends to accept the mite of the poor widow, the poor widow is by that very fact bound to cast in her mite. His willingness to accept small gifts is reason enough for giving them.

Apart from the public ministry of the Word, there is a multitude of smaller ministrations which lie within reach of every one, and which together produce great effects, as many drops converged constitute the volume of a river.

1. Without opening his lips to teach, or putting his hand to missionary work, every one who bears Christ's name either helps or hinders the gospel by his spirit and his life. Thousands of opportunities are thrown away through thoughtlessness, and a self-pleasing, worldly habit of mind. When you are closing a bargain or paying an account, although you lack courage and skill to address a word of religious instruction to the person with whom you are dealing, you may yet find and use a precious opportunity of serving God in the

gospel of his Son. Perhaps your correspondent is one of those men who have been led to believe that a profession of piety is a cloak drawn over deceit. If, in his dealings with you, he feels he has to do with a transparent honesty and a brotherly tenderness, the stumbling-block that kept him back from the Saviour is in a moment taken away. The course of his history and the condition of his mind may be such that it is precisely such an example of Christianity in common life that is needed to snap asunder the last thread of the band in which the Tempter has held his soul distant from the Friend of sinners. Stand in awe as you tread the streets and mingle with fellow-men, for at any moment you may meet one who is trembling on a narrow edge between "the tynin' and the winnin'." Your gentleness, or trueness, or brotherliness, touching his spirit where it is chafed and sore, may become the very instrument in God's hand of saving the man. "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." I suppose among the surprises that a modest, true Christian, will meet when he enters rest, this will be none of the least, that here and there, among the just made perfect, one and another will accost him with gratitude as spiritual father. Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or sick, and ministered unto thee? Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.

What if a fretful or false word of mine should become the narrow point turned in the wrong direction, which

shall meet the train of an immortal life as it comes up, and send it off on the track that leads to the second death! As we thread through life's promiscuous throng we are touching right and left immortal beings, giving them a bias by the contact to the right or the left. Oh, great is the influence of a life among other lives, for good or for evil!

"Aunt," said a little girl one day as she returned from school, "is every word of the Bible true?" "Yes," replied the lady. "But why do you ask?" "Because it says, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath;' and to-day Catherine was angry with me, and I gave her a soft answer, but it did not turn her anger away. She continued angry all the same." Here was a ministering child.

"Well done, good and faithful servant: continue to be faithful in the work, and the Master will give you reward in due time." Duty is yours, results belong to God. The soft answer dealt upon the transgressor a stroke on the right side; if it did not altogether turn her to righteousness, perhaps the next may succeed; and in the meantime, the soft answer is its own reward, rebounding on the speaker's bosom.

2. Another department of ministry is word and work directly contributed to the kingdom of Christ. The methods and opportunities are manifold and various as the characters and circumstances of Christians. "She hath done what she could" is the standard of measurement.

The more obvious methods are, a Sabbath-school; a

mission district to visit families; to carry a religious tract into the households. In these departments a greater number of labourers is required.

More private doors are also open. If you cannot undertake to visit for evangelic message a close or a stair, you may perhaps discover some family, or one person, who is in need. You might make yourself useful in a time of distress; and your word would then, as a still small voice in their ears, go deeper than mine or any minister's in the public assembly. As to work for the Lord, the rule is the same as in getting from the Lord: the rule for both is, "Seek, and ye shall find."

But a sphere lies open to those who shrink from even the most private walks that I have as yet enumerated. If you cannot make up to other people, and evangelize, as it were, on a foreign field, you may have your hands filled with remunerative labour at home. If you are bashful in presence of others, you may surely be bold in dealing with yourself. Here is an opportunity of doing mission-work. The kingdom of God is within you: go work in that vineyard. Within you the kingdom requires either to be first introduced, or established and extended. Labour here may be well laid out. We have often ground of regret when we send missionaries to a foreign field, that a considerable period of time is lost in preparation, before any execution can be done. The missionary may be employed for years in learning the language and ways of the people ere he can begin to preach. In the home field no such preparatory labour

is necessary. Where should a man be at home, if not in his own heart? Walk into it, and search its sins. Reprove them in the name of the Lord. Report the lurking-places and strongholds of the King's enemies, for you may know them well. You have been art and part with them in all their rebellion, and when you turn King's evidence against them, none can better reveal their haunts and designs. Bring them forth, those that would not have this Man to reign over them; bring them forth and slay them before him. If you cannot preach the gospel to other men, preach it to yourself. Successful work there will yield a large return to the Lord. If that field become ripe, seed from it will be carried away on the wings of the wind to make the desert fruitful. The multitude of thoughts within you, when they are made subject to Christ, will go out in legions to serve their new Master.

II. *The Motive: what compels them to do it.*—"Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."

It is worthy of remark here, at the outset, that the apostle confesses frankly he was kept at his work as a slave is by the sound of the whip behind him. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel. He anticipated that if he should slacken, the lash would descend. Is any one startled at this representation, as if it savoured of bondage and were at variance with the love and liberty of the gospel? Turn the subject over, and give it a second

thought: you will see that this is God's way of keeping his servants to their work, and that his way is very good.

Analogy will help us here. In our physical constitution, provision is made for the entrance of pain. We smart when our flesh is wounded or a bone is broken; we suffer severe pain when we are in want of water or food. These pains—or at least the machinery that produces them—have been inserted into our constitution by the hand of God. Behold, they are very good: they are the stern executioners of a wise and benevolent government, charged to watch when danger approaches us, and sharply prompt us to ward it off. The pain of a wound is our Maker's messenger to send us forth quickly in search of a cure; the pain of thirst, his messenger to send us forth quickly in search of living water.

It is the same wisdom and mercy that compel our spirits, by a kind of lashing which they feel, to avoid hurts and seek earnestly that which heals. It is consonant with God's ways to keep his creature busy with useful work by pressing him with pain if he indolently or ignorantly cease. Paul preached the gospel to Jews and Gentiles, to friends and foes, in season and out of season, —preached night and day, by sea and on dry land,— preached without intermission, for this among other reasons, that when he relaxed he was scourged as with scorpions. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.

By the secret line fixed in the conscience, which God in heaven holds in his own hand, many a man is compelled to run errands of benevolence who otherwise would

sit at home in indolent ease. I knew a boy once who, when he was doing some work for his father on the wayside near the house, was asked for an alms by a passing beggar. The boy refused; the beggar passed,—not, however, before he had pierced the youth by a certain languid look from a pale face and a drooping eye. The youth continued, mechanically, to handle his tool for the next half hour, scarcely knowing what he did. Woe, woe was coming in like a flood upon his soul, because he had not given the beggar a penny. This woe increased and accumulated until it became unbearable. The boy threw his instrument on the ground, and ran off through the fields by a shorter route, until he struck the public path in advance of the spot where the wearied beggar was trudging along. Coming back and meeting him, he silently placed the penny which he possessed in the beggar's hand, and ran home again to his work. The woe lashed him to duty, and then left him light of heart as the birds that sang beside him on the tree.

Ask no questions about that beggar's want or worth. Although the penny were the same evening thrown into the sea, or, what is worse, into the public-house, it was the best laid-out penny the lad ever won. From pennies so spent, fortunes spring. From such pennies come the riches of grace and the kingdom of God.

Look to some of the particular forces which press a human soul to diligence in the work of the Lord,—unfold for minuter inspection some of the strains of that three or four or five fold cord that bends the servant to his task.

1. The first and chief is that which the same apostle elsewhere expresses,—"The love of Christ constraineth us." He went forward boldly, strongly, unweariedly in his mission, never enticed aside by the world's smiles, and never deterred by its frowns; but then he could not do otherwise. The love of Christ had warped itself round his heart, and was drawing him on. He had no power to resist, and no will to resist. His will was taken captive, too, and led whithersoever the Master beckoned the way. Paul could not help going forward through every difficulty and danger to the goal of his grand career, any more than a ship can help going forward through the billows when its sails are full and its helm held aright. The affections of that man's soul rose indeed from earth to heaven, but they could not do otherwise: a pressure was upon his heart to force them upward, as great and commanding as the pressure that compels the waters of the sea to rise and constitute the clouds of the sky.

2. Another power, steady and strong, that plies the missionary and keeps him to his task, is the new appetite of the new creature. Distinct from the power of Christ's love, although acting in unison with it, as when two engines yoked in one gearing together drive the same beam round, the appetite for good, like natural hunger and thirst, contributes its quota to the propulsion of a Christian life. The Lord himself was borne forward in this manner, and owned it. When he was weary at Jacob's well; when his disciples, knowing well his weariness, tenderly desired to afford him a time of rest; and

consequently expressed their surprise to find him toiling under a burning sun, preaching out of season to a poor despised Samaritan, he said by way of explanation, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Now this is a power of nature within the kingdom of God, ever acting from age to age, like streams of water descending from the heights. Whenever human hearts are fitted into place, and exposed to it, they are gently, sweetly, mightily impelled onward and ever onward in their mission. Our Creator has not left it to our memory and judgment and thoughtfulness to take food in the quantities and at the times that shall be best fitted to sustain life: he has set in our frame a natural power, never-ceasing and self-regulating, which sends the living creature to his meals in due season, and lashes him if he neglect. In like manner it has pleased God, in the covenant of his grace, not to trust entirely to the reasoning faculty and the memory for the due discharge of the functions of life in the Christian community. He has implanted in the new nature a species of appetite for doing good, similar to bodily hunger, and hence the greatest doers of good to their fellows have ever been the most modestly unconscious of their own merits. Praise pains them, because they inwardly know it is undeserved. They feel that they deserve no thanks for what they did, because they could not have done otherwise. If they had refrained from doing good when a needy brother was within their reach, a great pain would have crept over their spirits, and gnawed like hunger at their hearts.

Instead of claiming credit for having done it, they confess that a *woe*, mighty and steadfast, like the rising tide, would have overwhelmed them if they had not done it.

Faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity. By these two, faith and hope, you get in for your own soul's satisfying; but by charity you give out to satisfy the needy from the treasure you have received from the Lord. Among the graces of the Spirit, the outgiver is greater than the ingetters. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

3. There is yet another cognate power that works in harmony with those already named to keep the worker busy, if his own life is hid with Christ in God—the need of a sinning, suffering world. A brother ready to perish lies a heavier weight than lead upon a loyal, loving heart, and produces that *haste to the rescue* at which the giddy world, ignorant of the moving power, gazes as an inexplicable phenomenon. Ah, brethren, if the secret machinery of the Christian life within us were well oiled and free of rust, we should move quickly in these days; for the appropriate kind of power is playing on us in a mighty volume all the day long. A world's miseries, rushing down like a river in flood, become the specific power which presses a Christian into the service of Christ.

All great philanthropists have been reckoned wonders in the world. On no other conditions could a greatly philanthropic life emerge. If the world did not stare in astonishment at the phenomenon, the fact would prove that the world was in such a state that great philan-

thropy was not needed to bind up its sores. Paul himself was a wonder in his day—Howard a wonder—Brainerd a wonder. People saw the mighty movements of a life proceeding against the forces of nature, as nature was experienced in themselves. They knew not the power that moved the ship against the stream. The breath of the Spirit is unseen. If you are so placed as not to feel it, you wonder at its effects.

In a cleft of a mountain, high above the city, where groups of manufacturing industry are gathering, you are led through a door in a lofty, massive wall, to a spot where you see a slow, steady, vast, mysterious movement. The sight is half the disk of a great water-wheel; it is the rising half. You see a series of strong, heavy beams, of great length, green and dripping, rising up at the further extremity, although the leverage is very great,—rising and ever rising, like a giant ever lifting his outstretched arms. And you see, moreover, that besides lifting up without ceasing their own vast weight, these solemn, silent beams, are driving a wheel which imparts motion to the machinery of a neighbouring factory. You stand and gaze at these huge arms, ever rise, rising, till you grow giddy; and if your imagination is lively, you are conscious of vivid pity for the painful toil of the mute labourers.

Your guide now removes the covering from the other side, and the secret of this patient, steadfast toil, is revealed. Opposite the rising arms are arms that fall; for a constant stream of water is playing on their extremities, and the weight of this water ever flowing compels the

arms on the other side to rise. You wonder no longer at the patient, persevering power, which these beams put forth, ever rising, and ever impelling, as they rise, all the machinery of the factory.

Ah! if, after gazing on the labouring life of a great missionary, we could get a door opened into his heart, and thereby get a glimpse of the inner life, we should behold the mystery revealed. We should discover that the sins and sufferings of humanity have been collected and led on to the affections of the man, and that the constant pressure of the volume absolutely drove his whole being into a ceaseless round of laborious activity. He could not help it: he could not help it any more than the mill-wheel could cease from its revolutions while the stream flowed on its circumference. Woe is me if I preach not the gospel—if I do not good-news it—if I do not bear messages of mercy to a sinning, suffering world! As long as the stream flows on, the arms must rise and toil. And the stream will not soon cease—"The poor ye have always with you." Rest?—no; this is not your rest, because it is polluted. A rest remaineth for the people of God.

The life that is placed under the play of these three kindred powers will be an active life. The love of Christ—the appetite of the new nature—the sins and sufferings of the world,—these three may well stir the stiffest out of all his fastenings to the earth, and send him off, like flaming fire or stormy winds, on errands of mercy at God's command, and for man's good.

XIV.

The Two Baptisms.

"*Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"—1 PETER iii. 20, 21.

GOD'S goings were glorious of old, and they are glorious now. The former dispensations had one glory, and the present dispensation has another; and the glory of the latter house excelleth the glory of the former house. But all these successive revelations were manifestations more or less distinct of the same eternal and unchangeable holiness and love in God. The plans of the Infinite have not changed in these last times. They are unfolding into maturity, and accomplishing their original design.

The histories and doctrines of the Old Testament contain the same truths that are more plainly revealed in the New. The types and their fulfilment follow each other as bud and blossom. The Lord himself in his

ministry often lifted up the ancient promise, and joined it to that fact of his own redemption in which it was realized. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...But he spake of the temple of his body" (John ii. 19, 21). "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John iii. 14, 15). "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead" (John vi. 48, 49). The apostles, too, after the example of their Lord, frequently presented the type and its fulfilment as united pairs. Thus Paul writes: "Into the second tabernacle went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing" (Heb. ix. 7, 8). And Peter, in our text, contributes another specimen, connecting the deluge with Christian baptism as the early bloom of promise and the later ripened fruit.

It is questionable whether we would have had skill enough to discover that these two facts contained essentially the same revelation, if the union had not been expressly pointed out to us in Scripture. The wild flood that destroyed the ancient world, and the gentle waters of baptism in Christian times,—these two at first sight seem to have little in common. The connection is by no means so obvious as in some other types; but it is not less real. In others, the water bursts from the

ground and flows along the surface, so that the thirsty have nothing more to do than stoop and drink. Here the well is deep, but there is water in it; and the water, when we reach it, is as pure and as cool as that which flowed spontaneously. The apostle in this text has furnished us with something to draw with; and we shall accordingly endeavour to bring up for use the living truth that lies in the bottom. It is not our part arbitrarily to invent connections between Old Testament facts and New Testament doctrines; but when they are given to us in the Scripture, we should set ourselves meekly and patiently to learn what they are, and faithfully apply the lessons which they contain.

The subject is divided to our hand into two parts—the type, and the lesson which it prints.

I. The salvation of Noah by water.

II. The salvation of Christians by baptism.

I. *The salvation of Noah and his family by water.*—You are familiar with the narrative in Genesis. Peter does not recapitulate the facts, but alludes to them as well known. Eight souls were saved *in the ark* and *by water*. The English translation is literal, simple, and certainly correct. Sometimes it is necessary to modify a little the English words in order to reach the real import of the original; but it is not so here. In this case we have nothing to do but keep by the words in their simplest meaning. It is true, expositors have generally thought it needful to take a dealing with the expression

in order to bring it into consistency with what they thought to be the drift of the passage. "*By water*" has been found difficult. Noah, they say, was not saved *by* water: he was saved *from* water when it threatened to destroy him. But the text does not say he was saved from water: it says he was saved by or through means of water.

This difficulty is caused by the limited and partial view of the whole transaction which these expositors have taken. Look first to the principal word in the whole passage,—"*saved.*" This is the chief; this dominates all. Whatever its meaning may be found to be, it controls the meaning of all the rest. From what were Noah and his family saved? From death by drowning, it has been generally understood to mean. Hence it became necessary to explain away the expression, "*by water;*" for certainly it was not by water that they were saved from being drowned. In this respect, it was water that constituted their only danger.

When standing low, we turn our eyes in that direction, the water of the flood is the first thing we see. And being the first, it is also the last; for it obstructs the view of all beyond. Come up higher,—get a loftier standpoint, and you will command a wider prospect. As long as you think merely of Noah being saved from death by drowning, you miss the grand design of God in bringing the flood upon the earth. If the purpose of the Supreme had been to preserve the lives of those eight, it could have been accomplished by preventing the flood from

coming, better than by constructing an ark to float on its surface. What object did the Almighty Ruler contemplate in those stupendous arrangements? To preserve his truth, and the earthen vessels that contained it, not from the flood of water, but from the flood of sin. The water flood, so far from being the source of danger, was the instrument employed to save. God employed one flood to wipe away another.

A deluge of ungodliness was spreading and swelling, threatening to overwhelm and quench the last spark of spiritual life on earth that still lingered in the family of Noah. The gates of hell seemed about to prevail, and were ready to blot out God's name and remembrance from the world that he had made; for it is in man that his Maker will retain a memorial—in man, or not at all. He will not engrave his name on the rocks, nor emblazon it in starry letters on the sky. He chooses the fleshtables of loving human hearts as the ground on which his glory shall be written. This is his rest, and here shall he dwell. If human hearts were all closed against him, God would loathe and desert his world. But this shall not be. The Almighty will not permit himself to be banished from his works. He made man in his own image, for himself; he will maintain his hold of humanity, until the set time come when God shall be manifest in the flesh—when man shall be taken for ever into union with the Godhead. God will have a seed to serve him while sun and moon endure. For this purpose he chose Noah and his family, as vessels to retain and transmit

the knowledge of his name. If divine power had not then interfered, the last remnant of righteousness would soon have been submerged under the ever-rising tide of sin. It concerned the plans and the honour of God that this should be prevented, and therefore Noah was saved —saved by water! The Lord saved Noah as he is wont to save his own in all times,—by destroying the enemies who were prepared to devour him. Noah was saved by baptism—a baptism that washed away the filth of the world, and left him standing free.

This is the Lord's way from the beginning, and will be his way to the end. The first promise that cheered the heart of man after his fall, was the promise of deliverance accomplished by a destroying—by the crushing of the serpent's head. Thus was Lot saved from Sodom; and Israel from Egypt. Lot was saved *by* fire, rather than *from* it. If the fire had not been sent, he and his righteousness would have been extinguished soon in the surrounding wickedness. By terrible things in righteousness the Lord answered his servant's prayer. He burned off the heap of corruption that was rising up and ready to choke the spiritual life in Lot's soul. The Hebrews, when they were almost overtaken and overwhelmed by their enemies, were saved by water. Had not the water closed over the Egyptians, they would have been dragged back into bondage.

Thus when we get a higher standing, and look in the light of heaven afar upon the design of God, we find that God saved Noah, not from water, but by water. He

washed off by a flood of water that mighty element of evil that was working upward to the extinction of all spiritual life, and all memory of God and goodness.

The salvation which God works for his own, both in its whole and in its several parts, is a twofold operation. It is deliverance by destruction. In the Old Testament times, this principle of divine government was exhibited in acts and ordinances of a more material kind. Christ had not yet come; and the personal ministry of the Spirit had not yet been fully developed. The providential dispensations and religious rites in which the principles were embodied, accorded with the infant state of the world and the Church. In form the manifestation was childish; but even in form all that was childish has been done away, and the self-same truths are set forth in the ordinances of a more glorious ministration.

In every great work of deliverance we are called to behold the *goodness* and *severity* of God. It was when Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the beach that they sang unto the Lord this song,—"Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The same Spirit, poured prophetically upon Isaiah, that proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord," proclaimed also, in the same breath, "the day of vengeance of our God." These two go together as a pair. They cannot be separated. Since evil has entered creation, there can be no acceptable year without a day of vengeance. As painters throw in a black shadow behind their letters to bring them out in

power, so the day of vengeance is necessary to sustain and reveal the year of grace. But the clearest example of this principle lies in the prophecy that fell from the Saviour's own lips. When the Lord in the latter day shall sit upon the throne of the kingdom, he will say, "Depart, ye cursed," as well as, "Come, ye blessed," —nay, the "Come, ye blessed," could not be effectually spoken unless it had the curse beside and underneath it to lean upon. Salvation is accomplished by a destruction. Still, the righteous remnant are saved by a flood.

II. *The salvation of Christians by baptism* is like the saving of Noah by the waters of the flood.—We draw near now to behold a greater sight. We contemplate now the redemption wrought by Christ and enjoyed by his people. We are saved by baptism; and this salvation is like the deliverance wrought of old for Noah by means of the flood. Our present duty, then, is to investigate the great salvation in its fully-developed form, keeping our eye meantime on the deliverance of Noah as a type of the better thing that we now enjoy. Though the directly revealed redemption in Christ is the greater thing, yet a glance toward the type which contained and concealed it in the days of old is of great importance in directing our investigation; as a glance at the straw and the hollow chaff that held it is of great use to a botanist when he investigates the nature and uses of the ripened wheat. Thus the flood will help us to understand bap-

tism; and baptism rightly understood will throw back light on the obscurities of the flood.

We have already seen how the eight souls were saved by water; our business now is to learn that we, if saved, are saved in a similar way. The *danger* that surrounds us is similar; similar also is the *deliverance* that we obtain.

1. *The danger.*—It is altogether a narrow and inadequate view that thinks of hell as the danger and heaven as the deliverance. The danger is *sin*, and the deliverance is *pardon*. Sin is the seed that, if it is let alone, will bear fruit to death eternal: to be purged from sin, its guilt and its power, is the salvation that we need. As it is a narrow view to think of the deluge as Noah's danger, so it is a narrow view of our danger to think of God's judgments on account of sin. We must get a higher stand-point, and we shall obtain a wider view.

In God's sight the ailment of humanity is sin. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Find the way of making an end of sin, and the sting of death is instantly taken away. If it were not for sin we should have nothing to fear. We could smile at death, and at him who hath its power, if we were free from sin.

This is the evil from which we need to be delivered. A whole legion of devils finds room in a single human heart. These, the multitude of your thoughts within you, only evil, and that continually—these constitute the flood that threatens to drown you in perdition. Another flood must be poured out to wash this host of enemies away. Your soul surrounded by its own sins is like

Noah in the midst of the old world. If they are not destroyed by a flood, they will destroy you.

2. *The deliverance.*—It, too, is like Noah's. We are saved by a flood. We are saved by baptism. And what is meant by baptism?

In the first place, it is not "the putting away of the filth of the flesh." It is not the outward act of washing with water that can save a soul from the dangers that surround us. It is not a corporal and carnal thing. Although you were baptized in the Jordan, and though an apostle were sent from heaven to administer the ordinance, this washing of your flesh could not purify your soul.

Not this; but "the answer of a good conscience toward God." It is the cleansing of the conscience from its guilt, so that when God makes inquisition for blood, he finds no spot or wrinkle there; so that the conscience, when put to the question, answers peace to the challenge of the Judge. To help us in comprehending what is meant by the baptism that saves, the text does two things: first, it sets aside the material water baptism, as certainly not the thing that saves; and next, it bids us search for the meaning in the analogy of Noah's flood. This analogy leads us to conceive of some deluge that God pours out over us, sufficient to destroy both us and our enemies; and of some refuge by him provided, in which we are kept safe, till our enemies are swept away. As the waters of the flood saved Noah by destroying all the world of the wicked that surrounded and would have

overwhelmed him; so by this analogy we are led to expect such an outpouring of God's anger as would utterly consume us,—but such an ark for us to shelter in that we shall be saved from the deluge, and set down to enter a new state of existence in a renewed world.

But how can the wrath of God be poured out on my sins to cleanse them away, without also casting me, the sinner, into perdition? Here is the solution of the mystery. Read the text without its parenthetic clause, "Baptism doth now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is by being in Christ that we may get our sins purged away, and yet be ourselves saved.

He stands before God to receive what is due to his people's sins. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." That baptism to which he looked forward from the first of time, and which he met on Calvary, was none other than the wrath of God against sin, which he had in covenant engaged to bear. "Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together" (Ps. lxxxviii. 16, 17). The Messiah met that deluge, and emerged from it triumphant. From that baptism he rose again. The salvation of believers lies not in meeting God for themselves, when the vials of his wrath for sin are poured out; but in being found in Christ, when he receives his people's due. It is the part and privilege of a believer to be baptized into Christ, and

specifically to be baptized into his death (Rom. vi. 3, 5). Our baptism is into him, and he meets the baptism for us which would have carried us away. We have received the baptism, when in our Substitute we have received it. As Noah remained safe, shut up within the ark, while it received the surges of the deluge; so we, in Christ our refuge, are unhurt, while he meets and exhausts in our stead the justice due to sin. As the inmates of the ark might rejoice with trembling, when they heard the waves which would have devoured them beating against the sides of their refuge; so a Christian, accepted in the Beloved, rejoices with trembling, when he hears the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" drawn from the Redeemer by that baptism of fire, which, if it had fallen on the sinner's defenceless head, would have utterly consumed him.

The ark in which Noah found refuge rested on the new world, after the deluge was over, on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (Gen. viii. 4). This month, named Abib, was afterwards made the first month of the year for Israel: in it they were delivered from Egypt; and in it the passover was kept, on the fourteenth day. Jesus was crucified on the morning of the fifteenth, the day after the passover, the Friday of the week. The next day, Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, he lay in the grave; and on the following day, the seventeenth, he rose from the dead,—precisely the day on which the ark, with its precious burden of saved souls, escaped from the flood, and rested on the resurrection world. On that

same day Jesus escaped from the baptism that had been poured over him, and rested on the resurrection life. But in him and his rising all the ransomed rose. "If we be planted in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

How minutely exact is the correspondence of the type and its fulfilment! It is thus that you may have seen printers planting small brass points in the corners of their block, to secure that the next impression should be made exactly over the same place. Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness; not a jot or tittle of that law can pass, until all be fulfilled. The ark and the date of its resting may be set aside now, since its promise has been fulfilled in Christ, and since Christ has for ever perfected the salvation of his own.

As the flood saved Noah, by destroying the wicked that swarmed on the earth, while he escaped by being shut within the ark; the baptism wherewith Christ was baptized saves Christians, by destroying sins and sinners, so that they who are found in him in the time of visitation shall step out with him upon a new earth, under a new heaven, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

All who understand the gospel know that this is the only way of taking away sin, so that it shall neither condemn nor rule us. It is when all that sin deserved has been poured out upon sin, that it can no more defile or destroy. That flood fell on the Substitute, and all who are found in him are safe. A bright promise spans the heaven, assuring all who have in Christ, the Substi-

tute, been visited for sin, that no second judgment will ever overtake them. The just God will not again enter into judgment with any who have taken refuge in the Son. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again from the dead. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above.

Neither is this prophecy of private interpretation. It indicates the way of the Lord; and on the same principle his goings are governed still. He has not forsaken the earth. He sitteth upon the floods. He sends yet a deluge on an errand of mercy to his children. They fear when the fountains of the great deep break up around and underneath them; but through fire and water he brings them out into a large place.

But all are his servants. He has angels at hand, other than stormy winds and raging floods. From heaven the Lord looked down on one whom he regarded in love and determined to redeem. Seeing that wealth and prosperity were swelling up all around, to entangle and destroy, he sent a commercial crash that brought the rich man to poverty. Stripped of all, he escaped with his soul's life. As surely as Noah was saved by water, this man was saved by the flood that swept what is called his fortune away.

Nor does the saved in every case understand the Father's methods. They even cry out in impatience, "All these things are against me." They will be ad-

mitted behind the scenes one day, and see that all these things wrought together for their good.

I have watched an insect making its way with some earnest purpose along the highway. I have watched its movements so long that I have become much interested in the success of its errand. I have seen when a loaded cart was coming up, whose wheel would have crushed the creature in an instant. I have laid a twig across its path, and compelled it to turn aside. Oh, how it stormed and fretted against my interference: if it could communicate with its kind, it would have a tale of hardship to recount that night, of some unknown and adverse power that stopped its progress and overturned its plans. Conceive, now, that intelligence should be communicated to that tiny being, and it should discover that another being, immeasurably raised above its comprehension, had in compassion saved it from death!

Such will be the discoveries made in the light of heaven of the deliverances God wrought for his people. Oh, that will be joyful, to find out more and more of that incomprehensible thing.

Our senses are keen to discern material danger; if we were threatened by a flood, we would fondly flee to an ark provided. But sin has blunted our spirit's perception of the danger of sin. Flee to the stronghold, prisoners of hope, why will ye die?

XV.

A Pilgrim's Progress.

"*So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.*"—PSALM lxxiii. 22–24.

THIS psalm, like Romans vii., is the autobiography of a sinner saved. It records the progress of a pilgrim from the City of Destruction to the City of God. Midway on his course, the traveller has ascended a mountain, whence he looks alternately back on Egypt and the wilderness, and forward over Jordan, to the promised, provided rest. From this self-history of a soul we cut out a page at the crisis. This text tells about the turning-point, whether of first conversion or subsequent revival. If we understand this part aright, we shall soon be able to comprehend the whole; if on the track of the pilgrim we personally march over this portion of the journey, we shall reach in due time its happy terminus.

Giving parallel and equal attention to the exposition and the application of the lesson, let us trace the steps

of the pilgrimage, five in number, that are marked on the selected text.

I. *The character and condition of this man at first, and before he was turned to the Lord:* "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee."—There is a remarkable heartiness and thoroughness in this confession. It rings out clean and clear. This sound does not issue from an instrument that is either cracked or covered with clay. I do not know whether the first confession of this soul was so frank or so full,—I suspect it was neither. As long as the hope of pardon is obscured, the sound of confession is muffled and hesitating. Men never accurately measure the depth of the pit they lay in, until they are out of it. It is when their feet are set upon a rock, and their goings established there, that they take an effectual survey of their former state.

The born blind do not know what blindness is, until they obtain sight. The foolish and ignorant soul cannot fully fathom its own folly and ignorance, until the wisdom from above has begun to shine in. Thorough confession of sin is evidence of begun deliverance from it. The wretched captive dare not proclaim the baseness and tyranny of his oppressor, until he has escaped from his hands. "All our righteousnesses," exclaimed the penitent prophet, "are as filthy rags." But I suspect he did not think so meanly of that robe, while he had no other. He had got, or at least got sight of, a fairer

covering, ere he came out so strongly in contempt of his cast-off righteousness. Never was the thorough foulness of the old thoroughly seen, until the whiteness of the new revealed it.

There is a very great difference between one confession of sin and another. One makes his sins as slight as possible; another delights in showing their greatness. It is a law, whose seat lies deeper than our members, that he who expects to bear the burden himself, does all he can to make it smaller. It is when he knows that it will be wholly borne by the Mighty to save, that he stands back and allows all its vastness to be seen.

"*Foolish and ignorant.*"—These are linked together by a bond which the wise of this world can neither see nor break. He acted the fool because he did not know the truth, and he missed the truth because he acted the fool. Sin, as well as righteousness, goes round in a circle. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; and each individual is like one specific whirlpool in the great sea, which as it circulates, and by reason of its circulation, tends continually inward and downward. Each portion is at once cause and effect, pressing what is before and pressed by what is behind. It cannot rest. The foolish acting of an unreconciled man causes spiritual ignorance; and spiritual ignorance causes foolish acting. There the two chase each other, and will chase each other into the abyss, unless the Lord's hand be stretched out to save.

"*Ignorant.*"—He did not know; did not know his

soul's worth—his soul's loss; did not know the goodness of God, and its power to lead to repentance. This lack of knowledge led to a foolish course. The man who carries a treasure whose worth he does not know, gives it away to the first sharper who tempts him with a toy. He sells his soul for nought. Oh the vile stuff for which immortal creatures sell themselves! Again: the man who does not know the loss of the soul by sin, lightly esteems the redemption and the price at which it was bought. He who does not know the death that sin inflicts, makes light of the life that Jesus offers. He who does not know God, neglects to seek his favour, until he stumble on his throne. This foolish course of action makes deeper the darkness of ignorance whence it sprang. In the deepened darkness of his mind the fool runs more greedily after his folly. He is whirled, like water, more and more fiercely round, drawn more and more closely in, and sinks more and more deeply down towards the blackness of darkness for ever.

But besides the general description of his state and character, the penitent here introduces a particular comparison, to make the matter more precise and clear: "*I was as a beast before thee.*" And what does that word mean? A life of flagrant wickedness? No. We fall into a mistake when we say that very wicked men are like beasts. The imputation is a libel on those creatures of God, which continue to fulfil the part that he assigned them. The brute creatures serve much more nearly than man the end of their being. You do not find in

them the abnormal excesses into which human sinners run. Their chief characteristic is a life all for the present—a life steadily devoted to the immediate satisfaction of the appetites, without a thought sent up to heaven, or sent forward into the morrow.

See the cattle browsing on the grass. They enjoy life. They have no hope and no fear beyond the present moment. It is well. Such they were made; and as they were made, they remain. Their spirit goeth downward at the end, and cannot go upward—need not go upward during the course of their life. It is no shame to them to be beasts; but it is a shame for a man to be as a beast, for he was made in God's image. The beast never had a soul; and I have quenched the life of mine—put out its light. I was like a beast in having a body and life and appetites, and stopping short with these, as if these were all! They knew not a God to live for; and I lived without God. Being a man, I became as a beast.

This is the soul of sin; and this is, accordingly, the chief ingredient in the confession when quickening has begun. The overt acts of evil, whether small or great, are branches springing from this hidden root. The essence and fountain of all sin is ungodliness,—to be all for self, and the earth, and the present, neglecting eternity, the soul, and the Saviour, as if they did not exist. It is evidence of a thorough repentance, when the confession goes to the bottom, and tears up and exhibits openly this deepest, deadliest thing.

II. After describing his former alienation, the penitent next proclaims *his present nearness and peace:* "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." The form of expression here indicates a sudden triumph. There is a clear, conscious boasting in God, in place of former distance and lowness. All these things were against me; nevertheless, and in spite of them, my deliverance is complete.

Who can bring back a planet world after it has burst away from its orbit and plunged into the unlighted infinite? Its going away to-day makes it go further and faster away to-morrow. That world, once bright and fruitful, is now dark and cold; it feels no longer the grasp of the sun's gravity, basks no more in the sun's light beams. As it spins away on its devious course, who shall dare to hope that it can be arrested and reduced into the family of bright, warm worlds? Nevertheless, that outcast has returned, and smiles again in the sunlight. It is a great, unexpected, miraculous restoration. Such is the triumphing of this once alienated and darkened soul, when, by the outgoing of infinite mercy, and the drawing of infinite love, it is placed again among the children.

"I *was* as a beast; but I *am* with thee." Species do not interchange. The surest fact in all natural history is that creatures do not pass the line that separates species from species. But the transformations which are unknown in the sphere of nature, are accomplished in the region of grace. The man has become new. His soul had been

in abeyance: he had been as a beast, in relation to God. But his original nature has been restored: the image of his Maker has been re-impressed upon his being. The enmity has been taken away, and peace established. The soul is recalled: its quenched spark has been kindled again. Loving, living communion, has recommenced between the offspring man and his Father God. "I *was* as a beast; but I *am* with thee."

Mark how the change is described by its one essential feature. It is not written, I was ignorant, but now I have attained the wisdom from above; I was foolish, but now I walk circumspectly. These, and more than these, were included in the change; but the only thing recorded regarding it is, "*I am with thee.*" Then, as now, reconciliation was the main thing. The distinguishing characteristic of God's people under the old covenant was, that they were "a people near unto him." In New Testament language, and under New Testament light, the saved are made nigh through the blood of Christ. He is our peace.

And when a prodigal has been thus reconciled and admitted, it is, once near, always near. He goes no more out. "I am *continually* with thee." Nothing is constant except that which is under the natural laws. The help that we can render, or the course that we can follow, is fitful, changeful; but the beating of our hearts is constant. That process is not left depending on our memory or zeal, but set in the machinery of nature, beyond the reach of children, who would meddle with it at one time

and forget it at another. Such is the arrangement in the kingdom of spirit for keeping the reconciled near: deep in the being of the regenerated lies a law that by a necessity of nature gravitates toward God.

> "What time soever I awake,
> I ever am with thee." (Ps. cxxxix. 18.)

Before we part from this second topic, mark again the connection between it and the first. The one is confession of former estrangement: the other, rejoicing in present peace. While he was distant, he did not complain of his distance: when he began to complain of distance, it was a symptom that he was creeping near. When he was as a beast, he uttered no cry of horror over his wretchedness: as long as he was as a beast he was dumb. The confession is not, I *am* a beast, but, I *was* one. The complaint about his earthliness and alienation from God was the breathing of a new spirit in his breast. The risen Lazarus groans as he shakes the cerements of the grave from his stiffened limbs. The living cry, but the dead are silent.

III. Consider now *the cause and manner of this great deliverance:* "Thou hast holden me by my right hand."—On this subject observe, first, that he ascribes his deliverance all to God. The confession began in the first person, but here it suddenly changes to the second. At the beginning it was *I*, but here it becomes *Thou*. The fall was his own, but the rising again was accomplished by the power of God. I was foolish, I was ignorant, I

was as a beast; but thou hast holden me, and the consequence is that I am and ever shall be near. The restoration has no *I's* in it. It is not,—I took thought, I arose, I returned and amended; it is not *I* at all, it is only *Thou*. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

"Thou hast *holden* me."—He knows now that he was sinking by a law: the law was sin: under the pressure of a law in his being, his distance from God was doubling every day. What no law could do, God did—did for his people in the days of old, and now declares how he does it, by sending his Son. He sent from above to take me: he drew me out of many waters: he took me from a horrible pit and from the miry clay.

The Spirit in the prophets gives the same account of the transaction that this saved man inserts in his own biography: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." The incarnation is the act whereby God bowed down to take the prodigal by the hand, and lead him home. The work was done in the days of old, but the manner in which it is done has been revealed by Christ.

Nor is it merely the forth-putting of almighty power to bring the distant nigh. Above, there is indeed an everlasting arm outstretched; but below, a willing people gladly grasp it. The power of the Spirit is exerted on the will to make it new. "Draw me: we will run after thee." These two sides of one transaction are successively represented in the parables of the lost sheep and the

prodigal. The lost sheep corresponds to "draw me;" the prodigal, to "I will run after thee." These are the two associated features which constitute the transaction. God by his cords of love draws the man: the man, obeying the impulse of a renewed nature, freely runs after God. It is love that draws; and love draws by a bond that is not felt to be a bond: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Here the conception is indicated, in the pictorial style of the Old Testament, by the expression, "Thou hast holden me *by my right hand.*" The picture represents a father leading his strayed child home. The child is not dragged; he is led. He has not been seized in anger; he has grasped the hand held out in fatherly love. The child is looking up in the father's face, running by the father's side, and leaning on the father's strong arm. This is not the capture of a thief or a deserter—they are dragged back unwilling, by force; they are shackled to their captors by links of locked iron. This is the return of a child, lovingly led by his father's hand.

Prodigal children! babes lost in this wood! the Father is out in search of his wanderers. He invites all; will accept any; but he carries none home unwilling. "Whosoever will, let him come."

IV. *The course through life which the penitent now expects to keep:* "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." —In this man's esteem salvation implies holiness. Elsewhere he has linked these two together: "I have hoped

for thy salvation, and done thy commandments." Still more explicit is the expression of the same union in the New Testament: "Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God."

1. Deliverance from condemnation carries with it turning from sin. As the new-born child seeks its natural food, the regenerated count it their meat to do the Father's will. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies;.....for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. vi. 12, 14). "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus ii. 11, 12).

2. The rule of life for the reconciled is the Word of God. "*Thy counsel.*" "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." The heir of heaven, while he sojourns in this dark, rough world, needs and gets "a lamp to his feet and a light to his path." The Word of the Lord is his light. By that light he discerns his path, and follows it. "Thy word I have hid in my heart, that I should not offend against thee." "O send forth thy light and thy truth."

3. Reconciled and renewed though he be, and walking in the light, he cannot yet be left to himself. "*Thou shalt guide me.*" It is not enough that he has been held up and brought nigh once for all: he needs and gets the present, permanent, personal care of the Father, at every stage, every step of his pilgrimage. His trust is not in

himself; his trust is not even in God's truth; it is in God. "*Thou* shalt guide me." Whether it be the first arresting of the distant dead, or the continued direction of the returned and living, still the word is *Thou*, not *I*. It is not even the Bible, but God by the Bible, that leads the saved over the track of time, and into the eternal rest. Not "Thy counsel," but, "Thou, by thy counsel;" and thus the Lord's own prayer, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

"*Counsel:*" we all need it; we all get it; we all take it. No human being is entirely self-contained. *Autocrat* is indeed a word in our dictionaries, but the thing which the word signifies is not in this world. It is applied to those princes who rule without the advice of a parliament; but they do not rule without advice. Those who are termed self-rulers are more swayed by counsel than other men. None are exempt: humanity does and must take counsel. Counsel, what and whence? Many blind guides are going, within and without. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, careering quick and manifold like clouds before the wind, drawing the life after them; and among our fellows the least wise are ever readiest to offer their advice and take the direction. A king of Israel once bluntly confessed that he hated a prophet of the Lord, because his words were not courtly flattery. He swallowed sugared lies that pleased his palate, and perished by his choice. There are some people here, both young and old, that are kingly in their notions and ways. Disliking the counsel that runs counter to their plea-

sures, they follow the counsel that pleases them, and so perish.

Brothers! God condescends to counsel, to advise you. Hear, and your souls shall live.

V. *The issue of all in eternity:* "And afterward receive me to glory."—We must beware lest we mistake our province in the exposition of this head. We cannot rend the veil and display before curious eyes the blessedness of the saints made perfect. Eye hath not seen it; ear hath not heard it. Some books, written by rash hands, and eagerly scanned by curious eyes, pretend to describe with wonderful minuteness the condition and the occupation of heaven's inhabitants. The result is a coarse caricature. Nay, those who cleave still in heart and life to the dust cannot profitably paint the scenes and incidents of heaven; and those who have been in some measure refined and sanctified in the body will certainly not try. You cannot have in printed books these particulars of the unseen world: for those who venture to sketch them prove by the very fact their own unfitness; and those who through the Spirit have attained some measure of fitness, know so well their own unfitness that they hold their peace, while they contemplate the promises of God. Nothing can be more repulsive to the refined and Christianized sense than long particular stories of what the saints in glory say and do,—hard, coarse, cold speculations, rattling against each other like dry bones, wherewith one man, for notoriety or gain, would practise upon the

weakness of humanity,—the appetite for prying into the secrets of the unseen.

This text tells not what the glory is: it tells only that the saved will be admitted into it. It reveals not what they will get, but where they shall be. Our part here, accordingly, is not to strain, as though by straining we could see through the dark portal of death, and describe the things that are at God's right hand. Our part rather is to mark well the nature, the ground, and the effects of a thing that lies within our reach,—namely, *the hope of glory that now animates the heart of a saved man.*

The key-note is maintained throughout this anthem: from first to last it is the salvation of God. Alike in regard to guiding through grace here and entrance into glory yonder, it is *Thou*, not *I*. "Thou shalt receive me." How much of the present, personal God, is in that religion which really supports a soul in the evil day! "I will not fear; *for thou art with me.*"

The glory is a thing future and invisible; but the hope of it in a believer's heart is present and felt. The only link by which we can connect ourselves with the glory to be revealed, is present reconciliation to God through his grace. The full form of this precious thing is written in the New Testament,—which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

It is not, I shall make my way in; but, "Thou shalt receive me." It does not imply any preternatural knowledge of heaven, but a spiritual communion with the

Friend of sinners, who is already there. God with us, is in heaven God for us. "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But will he receive me then? That question must be answered by another,—Do you receive him now? If Christ knocks in vain at the door of your heart, you will knock in vain at the door of his heaven. Unless the kingdom of God be within you here, you shall not be within the kingdom of God yonder.

Look yet for a moment, ere we close, to the last three points, that we may mark their order and their relations.

1. Salvation accomplished by almighty grace: "Thou hast holden me."

2. New obedience now, according to the Word of God: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel."

3. Hope of glory afterward: "Thou shalt receive me."

In the middle is the actual holiness,—the new obedience of the saved man, and on either side a strong one on whom it may lean. On the one side is salvation already accomplished; on the other is the hope of glory yet to come. The best, the only way of sustaining an obedient life, is to look unto Jesus. Faith, while it fights here, looks alternately backward and forward for support,—backward to Christ come, forward to Christ coming. Actual holiness in a human life cannot stand unless it have both to lean upon. He treads steadiest who leans at once on both as he goes up through the wilderness. These two, the sufferings of Christ and the glory that

should follow, the angels, who are servants, desire to look into; but the children, who are heirs, possess and enjoy. All things are yours when ye are Christ's. The Christian life is sustained between Christ come and Christ coming,—between his sacrifice for sin and his glorious appearing.

The same experience was otherwise conceived and expressed by the faithful of a former age. On the one side, looking back, it is, "Thou hast holden me;" on the other side, looking forward, it is, "Thou shalt receive me;" and now, in the middle, it is, "I shall be guided in the right way by thy counsel."

In this brief portion of the Word, and within the range of one soul's experience, the two opposite extremes meet. It is from "a beast" to "glory" at a bound; from a piece of brutish animated flesh to an angel-flame of fire; from a creature whose soul has been blotted out, to a creature who is the habitation of God through the Spirit. How could any one in the body traverse the distance between these two extremes? The way is short and simple. Christ crucified reveals the mystery. Both extremes meet in him. From the glory of the Godhead he bowed down,—down to a depth of humiliation which we can neither describe nor conceive; lower than the lowest of the lost whom he came to save. The sorrows, the sins of his people, whatever these may be,—unnumbered, unmeasured, like the stars of heaven,—he took upon himself and bore. Beneath all he bowed down, that on him they might be laid. Those who have part in his death have

part also in his resurrection. Those who become one with Christ crucified remain one with Christ glorified. *In* Christ when he suffers, *with* him when he reigns. Permit him to hold you this day, and he will receive you on that day. Now say to him who meekly knocks, "Come into this heart and dwell;"—he will say to you, when he judges the world in righteousness, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

XVI.

"Himself he cannot Save."

"*He saved others; himself he cannot save.*"—MARK xv. 31.

MAN proposes, but God disposes. The creatures, with all their faculties, lie in the Creator's hand, and he employs them as instruments in the accomplishment of his design. He makes the winds his messengers, and flaming fire his ministers. The willing and unwilling are equally under control, and he chooses now one and now another as a rod to smite an enemy, or a shield to defend his own. He makes the wrath of man to praise him, so far as it is permitted to burst forth; while the remainder of that wrath, or the portion he does not need, he restrains. Paul, after his enemies had done their worst, was able to write quietly to the Philippian Christians, that the things which had happened to him had turned out to the furtherance of the gospel. The Lord, who had already in Paul's conversion turned the heart of the king, had power also to turn the fierce flood of persecution, so that, instead of destroying, it contributed to establish the kingdom of Christ.

God in sovereignty often selects as his instruments those who have no desire to be subordinate to his will. The efforts of rebels to thwart the Sovereign's plan frequently become the means of accomplishment. Thus the glory of God is more fully declared. This method of the divine government is conspicuously displayed in the history of Joseph. The envious brothers formed and executed a plan for his ruin; but the direct effect of their manœuvre was to save both Joseph and themselves. Such bright and beautiful representations of God in history are ever and anon thrown off as the wheels of providence move round, and the threads of human experience are woven into the web of the world's life. If the heavens declare the glory of God, the earth is continually giving back an articulate echo of their testimony. Fear, and sin not: God is everywhere. In him we live, and move, and have our being.

Some passengers on the ship's deck may be walking forward, and some walking aft, and some standing still; but all, and all alike, are borne onward to their destiny by the breath of heaven in the sails, and according to the will of the pilot who holds the helm in his hand. This world in space is like a ship on the sea. Of the teeming multitudes that crowd its surface, some intelligently and willingly walk in the way of God's commandments, others violently resist, and others cleave sluggishly to the dust like clods of the earth; but our Father is at the helm,—he will make all subservient to his purpose. Every atom will be compelled to take its place and contribute its own

share to the establishment of his kingdom and the redemption of his people. The sovereignty of God is a precious doctrine. Providence is sweet to them that believe: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Nor is it only the course of history and the actions of men that are thus overruled. The words which flow from human lips, and the thoughts which germinate in human hearts, are compassed and controlled by our Father's hand. It was a glimpse of true divine light that flowed into David's heart through the rendings it endured, when he said of Shimei, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." Curses that go out of a man's lips defile the man; but curses that come against a man from another quarter may become the means of purging away his own dross, and confirming his faith in God. The thorns which within a field choke the wheat and render it unfruitful, may outside of the field be a safe-guard.*

In the text you find an example of this feature in the divine administration. A truth is spoken, but it is a truth which the speakers do not know. By this word the railers meant to mock the pretensions of Jesus: by it the Spirit in the Scriptures declares the glory of God in the gospel of his Son. Like Balaam, these false prophets intended to curse; but their lips were overruled, and framed to express the distinguishing feature of redemption.

* For examples of God's overruling providence, see Numbers xxiv. 10, John xi. 47–52.

Apart from the meaning of their words, the scoffing of these scribes was overruled by God for the accomplishment of his own purpose. By their conduct they unconsciously fulfilled the prophecy of Scripture regarding the Messiah. This reviling constituted one of the marks by which those who waited for redemption in Israel should know the Redeemer when he came. "A root out of a dry ground: no form nor comeliness—no beauty that he should be desired: rejected and despised: they shall look on him whom they have pierced." Not one jot of these prophecies could fail: the Scriptures must be fulfilled. It was a necessary part of the evidence whereon we in these latter days might lean, that the Messiah when he came should in all points correspond to the Messiah promised to the fathers. Accordingly, while in the wise and powerful providence of God a full accomplishment of prophecy is secured, the enmity of those who rejected Christ is employed as a principal means of accomplishing it. Had Israel with one accord accepted their King, one distinguishing mark of the Messiah would have been wanting. The chief priests and lawyers, when they exclaimed, "Himself he cannot save," thought they were affixing the stigma of a detected impostor on Jesus of Nazareth in his dying hour; while by that very cry they were unconsciously sealing the truth of his claim to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. The biting scorn of these apostate rulers is one of the marks by which the faithful recognize their Lord. The flame of their anger against Christ becomes a beacon-light that guides Christians safely into

the harbour. The wound which slanderous tongues inflict becomes the marring whereby the faithful distinguish their beloved one among ten thousand. Through such suffering the Redeemer is made perfect.

Let us examine now more particularly the truth which the revilers articulately declared in contrast with the falsehood which they meant.

What the Jewish leaders understood and intended to say is obvious at a glance. They see their enemy at last in extremities. They had often plotted to take away his life. Galled by the authority which his doctrine and his miracles had acquired for him among the people, they thought they could not be secure in their seat of authority as long as Jesus of Nazareth lived. Now that they have at last compassed the object of their desire—now that they see him ready to expire on the cross, they cannot contain themselves. They must give vent to their exultation. They must triumph over their victory. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." When they see him dying, they deem the sight a proof of his weakness. They proclaim the fact in order to throw discredit on the miracles which he had performed. They saw him suffering even unto death,—they assumed that he suffered because he had not power to save himself: and seeing that he could not save himself, they assumed that he could not have saved others. They think that if he had saved others, he would also have saved himself; and they flourish the fact of his yielding to death as a proof that his miracles had been impostures.

This word may be read in two ways. The one is darkness, the other light. The one is a lie, the other is the truth—the truth on which the saving of the lost depends. The leaders read it thus: We see he does not save himself from death, and thence we infer that he has not power; and whatever appearances may be, he cannot have saved others. The meaning which, under direction of the Spirit, the word in the Scriptures contains for us is, He saved others, as their covenant-substitute, and therefore he cannot also save himself from the obligation which he undertook as mediator. He saved others, and therefore himself he cannot save. His life has been pledged for the life of his people forfeited: they have obtained their life eternal; and therefore his life, so pledged, cannot be saved.

The King's Son has offered himself as hostage for certain subjects that were held in captivity by a foreign power. He has gone into their place, and they have on the faith of this transaction been set free. Precisely because they have been set free, he cannot now escape. He has saved others by the substitution of himself in their stead, and therefore himself he cannot save.

In order to explain fully how Jesus, having saved others, could not also save himself, we must refer to the history of redemption. Bear in mind that we live under a divine administration that has been well ordered from the beginning. When an architect begins to lay the foundation of a building, he has the perfect plan already before his eye. Although it be only a man's covenant,

it is not carried forward by fits and starts according to the changing circumstances of the times. The design is completed from the first, and its execution is carried forward, it may be from generation to generation, all in accordance with the first design. Much more certain and evident it is that God, who sees the end from the beginning, framed his plan at first, and conducts his administration from age to age according to that plan. The way of salvation for sinful men is not left uncertain, to be modified by the accidents of the day. The gospel does not take its character from passing events. It is, indeed, a transaction between the unchangeable God and erring man; but it takes its character from the Source whence it springs, and not from the objects to which it is directed. It partakes of the immutability of its Author: it has nothing in common with the caprice of men. It has come from heaven to earth, not to receive, but to give an impression. The sun's rays when they reach the earth meet with a various reception. At one time they are intercepted before they touch its surface by an intervening subordinate orb; at another time the earth itself keeps out the light from that side of it whereon we stand: at one place, even when the rays are permitted to reach us, they stir corruption into greater energy; at another time they paint the flowers and ripen the fruit, stimulating life and gilding the landscape with varied beauty. But whether they are kept at a distance or received, whether when received they make corruption more corrupt, or make beauty more beautiful, the sun's rays are ever the

same; they remain true to their celestial character, and are never changed by the changing accidents of earth. They retain all the purity of the heaven they come from, and contract none of the defilement of the earth they come to.

It is thus that the covenant of grace takes character from its Author, and not from the objects to whom it is applied. Some receive it unto life, and some turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; but the grace of God remains ever the same. The covenant has been in heaven settled fast: it is eternal and unchangeable. Christ is the mediator of the covenant, and in him it is complete.

In the matter of salvation, men ever recur, by a species of instinct, to the idea of a bargain—they come at first to God with a price in their hand. Yea, it was indeed a bargain, but not made with them: their redemption is indeed the paying of a price, but it is not a price that they can pay.

From the beginning the Son undertook to pay. The sin of men was foreseen, and a ransom was provided. Before any creature needed mercy, mercy was provided. Before death entered, a way unto life was prepared. Before the debt was incurred, a Surety had bound himself to stand in the debtor's room. Before any captive was shut up in prison, a ransom price was prepared to buy him off. Before the world was made, the price of its redemption was fixed, and the time set when that price should be paid.

But man fell, and came under condemnation, before the appointed time for paying the redemption price. Some of the sinful were called away to their account before Christ had shed his blood, the just for the unjust. Debtors must go to the great white throne before the Surety had paid their debt. And must they therefore perish? No. As soon as sin entered, saving began. When first man, God's creature, sinned, the sentence against him was not executed in full. The first hour that they lived on earth after they had rebelled was a salvation,—a salvation by Christ.

Fix your thought on that first hour that creatures made in God's image lived and breathed and walked about on his world after they had sinned. That must have been a day of wonder among the hosts of heaven. Those morning stars who sang in glad sympathy when man was made, and who were wont to behold how good were all God's works as they sped on his errands from world to world, must have been stricken with amazement when they saw for the first time what seemed to be an anomaly in God's creation. Not that the occurrence of sin could have seemed so strange to the angels who kept their first estate; for already they had witnessed a rebellion near the throne. They had seen sin, indeed; but they had seen it followed by immediate punishment. No sooner had the rebellion burst out, than the rebels were punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. In the flame of the pit they could still read the righteousness of God, as clearly as they had been

wont to read it by the light of heaven. But now appeared a sight that had never been seen before: the guilty were spared. As the barbarians of Malta wondered, not that a viper came out of the fire and fastened on Paul's hand, but that Paul did not in consequence immediately fall down dead; so when the holy angels saw God's intelligent creatures sinning against God, it was only what they had witnessed before—they wondered, not that creatures sinned, but that creatures sinning were still spared—that judgment against an evil work was not executed speedily. There must have been then a more intense desire than they ever experienced before to look into the counsels of God, and learn by what means his righteousness would be vindicated. Righteousness they had seen in the happiness of the holy, and righteousness they had seen in the doom of the disobedient; but where is righteousness now, when the sinful are permitted to live?

Searching into these deep things, they must in due time have discovered that what appeared a defect was the brightest exhibition of divine righteousness that had yet been given to the creature. Why was our race not doomed the day they fell? Because Christ had undertaken to become their substitute and pay their ransom. As yet he had not taken our nature, as yet he had not shed his blood; but on the faith of what the Son had promised, a respite was afforded and a pardon offered. There was a bargain, although we had no part in arranging its terms, or in paying the stipulated price. In the

covenant before time began, the Son of God undertook to give himself an offering for sin. On the ground of this undertaking, the guilty were spared; and now in the fulness of time the price must be paid. "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

Further: in the earliest ages of our race sinners believed, and, departing, entered the inheritance. The sacrifice of Abel was accepted, and Abel by a sudden, stormy passage, entered the eternal rest. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob sat down at the right hand of God in the highest, and as yet no sacrifice had been offered to take away their sin and satisfy divine justice on their account. On the faith of the Redeemer's undertaking, these all entered into peace before Christ was crucified. He got up beforehand part of his inheritance; but he got it as a part of his covenant. He obtained fruit from the travail of his soul before his soul had travailed as an offering for sin; but when the set time came, the price must be paid. Sinners and their Substitute cannot both escape. If he decline the cup, they must drink it: if it has not been required of them, he must answer. His people have already entered rest, and therefore he must die. If God should break his covenant on one side, what ground could we have to expect that he would keep it on the other? If he should change, so that the penalty should not be borne by the Substitute, how could we trust that he would not change so as to lay it on ourselves? "He saved others; himself he cannot save."

"He *cannot:*" this is not to limit the Lord. To say,

God who *cannot* lie, is a greater tribute to his unchanging truth than to say, God who *does not* lie. So, it is greater glory to attribute to Christ that he cannot save himself, than to attribute that he does not save himself. It is of the nature of God that he cannot do wrong. He cannot break a bargain. He cannot break it at that part where Christ must suffer, and he cannot break it at that part which secures that believers shall be saved.

If he had saved himself from humiliation and suffering, we could not have been saved. If the Son of God had treated the world when it fell as the priest and the Levite treated the man who fell among thieves,—if he had looked on us, and passed by on the other side, we should have perished all in our sins.

A traveller in an Asiatic desert has spent his last bit of bread and his last drop of water. He has pursued his journey in hunger and thirst until his limbs have given way, and he has at length lain down on the ground to die. Already, as he looks on the hard dry sky, he sees the vultures swooping down, as if unwilling to wait till his breath go out. But a caravan of travellers with provisions and camels comes up. Hope revives in his fainting heart. They halt and look; but as the poor man cannot walk, they are unwilling to burden themselves, and coldly pass on. Now he is left to all the horrors of despair. They have saved themselves, but left him to die.

A ship has caught fire at sea. The passengers and crew, shut up in one extremity of the burning ship, strain

their eyes and sweep the horizon round for sight of help. At length, and just in time, a sail appears and bears down upon them. But the stranger, fearing fire, does not venture near, but puts about her helm, and soon is out of sight. The men in the burning ship are left to their fate. How dreadful their situation, when the selfish ship saved itself from danger, and left them to sink!

Ah! what heart can conceive the misery of human kind, if the Son of God had saved himself from suffering, and left a fallen world to the wrath of God!

Here are two lessons, or rather, one turned in two ways. Let this word be a two-edged sword, turning every way to keep the gate of life—not to keep it shut, but to keep it open. First, turn it to those who are within, next to those who are without. How sure is the salvation of all who put their trust in Christ! "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died."

The bond that keeps these worlds suspended and circling round their centre may break—will break one day, when the heavens and the earth shall pass away; but the bond that unites Christ's people to their inheritance can never be broken. The death of Christ makes the life of Christ's people sure. His death is their life. The same link that held him to his suffering, holds them to life eternal. If that link could ever by any strain have been broken, it would have been when it held the beloved Son of the Father to his covenant of suffering for sin. With the same power that it held the Substitute

to the suffering, it holds the believer to life and safety. God is righteous in taking vengeance once: he is not unrighteous to lay the guilt on the sinner and his Substitute too. As surely as the Shepherd was smitten, so surely shall the sheep go free.

But a lesson lies in the text for those who live without Christ in the world,—who, occupied with other portions, will have none of him. The text I do not say seals the doom of any sinner in this assembly; for "now is the accepted time." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Flee to the refuge. The flag that flies from its ramparts bears yet, in glad, golden letters, the divinely-dictated motto, "Whosoever will, let him come." The text I do not say seals the doom of any here; but it certainly determines that they who are not found in Christ at last shall be cast away.

Let me lift from this text and display before the eyes of self-deceivers a warning, that, though a terror of the Lord, may be blessed to persuade men, ere it be too late, to take the Lord's side.

There are some who, when they examine themselves, cannot think that they are Christ's. The facts of the case are too plain to admit of deception at this point. They are not converted: they are not new creatures in Christ, walking with him and waiting his call: they are not born to the Lord. But they are not in a state of agony: they continue to enjoy a fair measure of comfort: they hope that something will turn out in their favour.

I learn in this text what will turn out, what must turn out in the great day. When you pass from life without any part in Christ, you are not saved according to the covenant of grace, and God will not come out of his covenant to save those who despised his warning all the day of grace. When his own well-beloved was bearing wrath for sin, when his own beloved cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" so firm and sure was the covenant for the redemption of Christ's people, that it would not, could not yield to save Christ from suffering what was due to sin. Oh ye who, in a life of worldly ambition, cherish a vague hope that Christ will in the end be tender, and not visit you with wrath, I bid you reflect. Christ did not, Christ could not, contrary to the provisions of his covenant, *save himself;* and he will not, *cannot,* contrary to the provisions of his covenant, save you.

XVII.

The Cleansing Blood.

"*The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*"
1 John i. 7.

IN some texts of Scripture, as in some species of fruit, a laborious ministry is needed to cut through the covering crust to the concealed kernel that constitutes the children's food. No such work is necessary here. This is a great, ripe, bursting fruit, lying naked under your eye and close to your hand. Scarcely any other ministry is required to-day than to bid the guests come near and eat abundantly.

On such a subject, and at such a time, we refuse to encumber ourselves with arguments and evidence. We take this at once as the word of God; and we take God at his word therein. Itself is its own evidence; it is seen in its own light. There is not in all the world anything at all like it, with which it might be confounded. Here, in Christ crucified, God is love; and yet God is righteous. Mercy and truth have never found on this sinful earth any other meeting-place. No rival, false or true, has

ever appeared. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." That word is as unique in the world as the sun in the sky. No impostor ever uttered it, or aught like unto it. It comes from man's Maker, for it fits into and fills man's deepest want. There is no salvation in any other: none other ever gave, promised, or even conceived, such a salvation as could fill an empty human soul.

Three things in the text should be separately and successively expressed and considered.

I. The Instrument.
II. The Object.
III. The Act.

I. *The instrument, or means of cleansing:* "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son."

1. "*The blood.*"—The blood is the life. When life was lost, in blood life was again found: death was the ailment, and death became the cure. As soon as sin entered into the world, the shedding of blood began. Blood was shed by sin, and blood was shed for sin. The first chapter of human history reveals a twofold blood-shedding—one bringing death, the other bringing life. The blood of Abel has two sides, and points two opposite ways: this way it points to the ailment—that way it points to the cure. It tells of death by sin, and of life through righteousness.

It is worthy of notice that in point of time the blood of the lamb was shed and accepted on the altar before

the blood of the offerer was spilt upon the ground. The Redeemer of men is beforehand with the destroyer of men. The remedy was prepared in heaven before the disaster was plotted in hell. The first blood that touched the world was the blood that takes sin away. Before sin's first victim appeared at the judgment-seat, the blood of the Lamb had been already there—his pardon and his righteousness. The redemption was secured, and displayed, and sealed, ere the first man who needed it was called to his account.

From the time of Abel's offering, onward, all the sacrifices proclaimed a want on earth and a resource on high. Everywhere altars were built and sacrifices slain. The early patriarchs, the Abrahamic covenant, and the Mosaic law alike, made the shedding of blood an atonement for sin. The heathen, too, by their eccentric offerings, corroborated the great revealed doctrine. You would not, in quest of evidence on some great event, go first to a maniac ; but if, after obtaining the testimony of the wisest man and the best, you should hear a madman in a wood singing wildly but distinctly the same story, you would treasure the fact as an effective corroboration. It is thus that the heathen, by their bloody sacrifices, give evidence of a truth which themselves do not know. God's voice, declaring his acceptance of a divine Substitute for fallen man, has produced echoes that roll up to the beginning of time and across all the breadth of the world. The articulation is broken and confused by many reflections from nation to nation, and from age to age, so

that those who hear it cannot understand its meaning; but when in the Bible we get the key-note—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"—we are able to reduce the wildest warblings into harmony. All the sacrifices have come like sunbeams—more or less distorted and dimmed in their progress—from Christ, and all return to meet in him again.

2. "*The blood of Jesus Christ.*"—There is only one sacrifice that can take away sin. From this substance all the shadows were projected. Resting on this one sacrifice for sin, the typical sacrifices reached upward to the beginning of the world, and carried consolation to those who passed away before Christ came in the flesh.

This is purely a matter of revelation; nature does not know it: nature only knows guilt and dreads retribution. There could have been no substitute, unless God had in mercy provided one; and no knowledge of a substitute provided, unless God in his mercy had revealed it. Jesus Christ was man; and as our Head in covenant, he gave himself in his people's stead. The shedding of his blood even unto death became the life of all who trust in him, for whom he died.

But wherein consists the sufficiency of the Substitute's sacrifice? Herein—

3. *He is God's own Son.*—In the beginning he was with God, and was God. He is the Father's well-beloved. He is chosen in the eternal covenant for this end, that he might give his life a ransom for many.

This is the point where faith is needed, and where our

own speculations are of little avail. We cannot climb up to that high heaven above us: we must throw ourselves into the arms of this Jesus Christ who is nigh to us, who has taken our nature that he might be within our reach. The matter does not depend on the accuracy of our research and the extent of our knowledge. The essence of the whole lies in the absolute sufficiency of the atonement made by Christ for sin. On this matter it is permitted, it is required of us, that we cast care away. The scripture here is applicable in full—"Casting all your care on him, for he careth for you." The whole strength of the case lies there. He—God, our Maker and our Judge—God, who made man in his own image, and would not abandon him even when he fell—God, almighty and all-wise—loved the creatures he had made for himself; continued to love them when they had sinned; so loved them that he gave his own Son,—that his own eternal, equal Son, gave himself a ransom for their life. In the covenant between Father, Son, and Spirit, the plan was fully laid before time began; and when the fulness of time had come, the Son took our nature—became flesh and dwelt among us—shed his blood, the blood which is the life—gave his life as a sacrifice for sin. This is the atonement for taking sin away, and admitting cleansed sinners into a holy heaven; the atonement which the Son offered and the Father accepted. That matter now is out of our hands: God has taken it into his own. What is required of us is, that we leave it in his hands—that we believe in God.

If this satisfaction were not sufficient—if the life of the Son of God given for men's sins were not sufficient for its object—it would be a defect in the purpose and the work of God. But this is not only impossible, it is inconceivable. If we admit the thought of defect on that side, we are for the time not thinking of the infinite and eternal God; we are sinking down to the conception of an idol. Our God—the God with whom we have to do, our Maker and Preserver, our Judge—has taken all that into his own hands. "Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide:" it is out of our hands. He has given the Son: the Son has given himself. Christ said, as he poured out his life a ransom, "It is finished;" and the Father has received him into glory, and committed all judgment into his hands.

On that side, brother, let go. Make no attempt to hold by twigs that grow on the face of the rock: let go—let yourself fall into Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

II. *The object to which the blood of Christ is applied:* "Sin," our sin; all our sin.

"*From sin.*"—Here the one great remedy touches the one great disease. Sin is the root of bitterness that has sprung up and defiled God's beautiful world: the sacrifice of Christ is the stroke delivered against that root to kill it, and so cleanse from its poisonous fruit the new heaven and the new earth, where the righteous shall dwell. Sin is that wherewith Satan destroyed man;

the blood of Christ is that wherewith God will destroy sin.

In this text are brought together the two greatest things of time,—the greatest evil and the greatest good. There the strong man and the stronger meet, with all intelligent creation as spectators of the conflict. Behold the battle on which our life and blessedness depend. Behold these two,—*sin*, and the *blood of Christ*. And the same two meet in deadly conflict now in single human hearts. Jesus has said, "If any man will open, I will come in;" and at his incoming he meets sin, either reigning still, or dethroned, but disturbing; but the stronger overcomes the strong, and makes him captive.

The disease was in the world, and would have destroyed it: to the lost world the Healer came. The blood of Jesus Christ flowed upon the ground on Calvary: the power of that life infinitely worthy, then shed, reached upward to the beginning of time and downward to its end, as sunbeams at noon reach the eastern and western boundaries of the hemisphere. For the sin of the world the Divine Healer shed his blood; and the same life poured out, infinite in atoning worth, streams into every open heart, to heal the sore disease that has broken out there. Every soul that opens to Christ becomes a separate battle-field; and all the lifetime from the beginning of convictions is the battle-day. The blood of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the life of the Life-giver devoted as an atonement for the

dead, is ready—infinite in value and ever at hand—to flow in and touch the exceeding bitter thing sin, and by touching to take it away.

When you plant a flower in your garden, you are not troubled with any doubt about the power of the sun to send a ray into its bosom, although he must needs at the same time pour rays into every flower over half a world; and this but a creature of our God, one of the works of our Father's hand. How much more shall life from the life of Jesus Christ, God's own Son, flow into your heart to heal you, O thou of little faith!

"*All sin.*"—There is a threefold universality in the remedy needed by man and provided by God. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;"—first, All kinds of it; secondly, All parts of it; thirdly, All degrees of it.

1. *All kinds of it.*—The guilt of our first representative lying upon us, as a heritage, is one kind. Our father was representative: he fell, and we in him. His sin was in some real sense our sin. True, a man readily resents this imputation, and complains. But he makes nothing of his resistance. For my own part, although I cannot explain all the difficulties that adhere to the subject, I clearly see that a man has just as much right, or as little, to complain of injustice in that he was born poor, or in Africa. We cannot by searching find out God. I intend to listen to all his word, and wait on all his providence, and count that he will show himself right when his own time comes. That kind of sin, whatever its spe-

cific nature may be, is cleansed away by the blood of Christ. Indeed it is remarkable that almost the only glimpses that the Bible gives us of this species of the disease are conveyed in the account of its cure. (Rom. v.)

Again: another kind is the inherent tendency to sin that lies like a law in our members from the first, and breaks out into activity parallel and simultaneous with the life. It is not so easy to raise questions on this head: men may dispute a doctrine, but cannot well deny a fact. And here the fact is obvious and uniform. "I find a law in my members, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." This kind, too, goeth out by the blood of sprinkling.

Again: all the actual sins that emerge on the individual life—the abundant overflow of that fountain of sin and uncleanness which has been opened in the heart of fallen man. To sin in this aspect, the blood, the given life of the Divine Substitute, applies a cure. This blood takes away sins, although they be like clouds.

2. *All parts of it.*—Not portions of a believer's sins are forgiven, but all. Suppose we should divide them thus, —sins of youth, and sins of fuller age. It is not that later and more distinctly remembered sins are taken off the conscience, while older and more dim remembrances are left like rust spots to eat through the soul's peace. All sins: look back by aid of memory—for the mind has an eye behind, although the body has only one before—look back on your life-course, and you behold the whole line dotted thick with spots of guilt. The line stretches

away into the dim distance, where it fades from your view. How many lie in the mist of life's early morning, before memory was awake to take notice of the facts. But these too are included in the "all." For although they may be beyond your view, they are not beyond the view of Jesus Christ, God's own Son. The healing does not depend on how much of his disease the patient understands, but on how much the physician knows. Our healer is the omniscient God. He knows all. Now, he did not give his life a ransom in order to blot out only those sins that we can remember and place before him in detail: he gave his life a ransom in order that he might purify a people unto himself, and have them without spot or wrinkle for his company in his kingdom. He knows all the sins, if we do not know them all; and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

Sins against God, and sins against man; sins in secret, and sins that are open; sins of omission, and sins of commission—in whatsoever aspect you view them, in all their multitude and variety, the sacrifice of God's Son takes them all away. The infinite covers all the finite: the life of God's Son avails for all that death, to take it away.

3. *All degrees of it.*—Some sins in their own nature, or on account of aggravating circumstances, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. In more senses than one the wicked and their wickedness are like the troubled sea. Over the expanse of human life, or a human life, all is bitter sin; even as over all the expanse

of the ocean it is bitter salt water. But as the ocean is in some parts very deep, and in others comparatively shallow, so the varieties in depth of sin, in the world, or in a life, are as many and as great. It is not possible to determine by a look on the surface which are the deepest places of either sea. The deepest may sometimes be the stillest. But one thing is sure as to the magnitude of the ailment: as the shallow portions of the ocean will drown a man as certainly, if he be cast helpless on them, as the deepest; so a soul that is left in its sin, without an ark for refuge, will perish, whatever may be the degree of aggravation that may have marked its guilt.

III. *The act:* "Cleanseth us."

While the act is one, it has several distinct aspects. Turned towards God on high, it is justification. Turned towards the believer himself within, it is peace of conscience. Turned outward upon the world and the Church, it is sanctification.

1. *Upward* in God's sight, it is justification. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Absolutely blameless and pure in God's sight is every one who is found by faith in his Son. "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." That word is spoken to the Redeemer himself, but it belongs also to all the redeemed. That holy oil of the Father's approbation which was poured out on the head of the High Priest,

flowed down to the utmost skirts of his garments. Now, in God's sight Christ's members partake of Christ's holiness. As the Father regards the Son, he regards all those who in the Son believe. Those who stand round the throne are in God's sight all righteous; and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Brethren, so far from being a sublime, exalted, merely contemplative doctrine this, it is the most closely practical of all teaching, and the most powerful on life of all beliefs. But look unto Jesus, and take God at his word. Count that God for Christ's sake has forgiven you, and walk out and in at your daily occupation as dear children of our Father in heaven. Count that the Judge has no charge against you, because it has all been discharged by the blood of Christ. This belief animating your soul will make your face shine among your fellows,—will make you happy within your own heart, obedient to God, and beneficent to men. To have your sins all blotted out from God's judgment-book through the blood of Christ, is the greatest fact of human history; and the belief of it is the greatest motive that can be brought to bear in behalf of goodness on a human heart.

2. *Inwards*, as reflected on the Christian's own conscience, it is peace. "My peace I give unto you," said Jesus: "not as the world giveth give I unto you." Many costly washings superstition has tried in order to cleanse the conscience and so obtain peace; but all in vain. Nothing but the blood of God's own Son has power to make

peace; for when that offering has been given and accepted, the Judge demands no more. Nothing lies behind unreached. This saves to the uttermost.

Conscience is a terrible disturber when it is left unclean, and a mighty peacemaker when it is purged. Conscience is a kind of resident ambassador from God in the inner court of the soul. Our appliances cannot satisfy the conscience, because the conscience speaks from God,—for God. But let the appliance for cleansing the conscience which God has himself provided, and with which he is well pleased, be brought to the soul, at length all strife ceases. When the blood of Christ is accepted and applied, conscience has no more to say, for the King eternal is satisfied.

The act of forgiving is God's act, and it is done on high; but when the soul within clearly and correctly sees the reflection of that great light glancing down from heaven, all its troubles subside, and there is a great calm. It is not that the soul can make peace within itself; but even that sea can settle down into a great calm when it hears its Lord's command, "Peace, be still." There are three experiences at this point.

(1.) Sometimes people think they see the shadow of God's forgiveness flitting about within their own hearts, when it is nothing else than the mists that spring from the uneasy ground. This is peace when there is no peace.

(2.) Sometimes a darkness remains over a soul after the blood of the Lamb has discharged its burden from the book of God. This is fear continuing in a poor feeble

heart after the true cause of fear has been taken away; as the sea sometimes continues to heave after the storm which stirred it has changed into a calm.

(3.) Sometimes the two meet—justification in heaven above, and peace of conscience in the believing man. God is at peace with him, and he is at peace with God. Discharge on the ground of Christ's blood is entered in favour of this man in the sealed book of judgment—he is safe; but an impression, faithfully taken off that entry in the book, has been dropped like a tiny leaflet from high heaven, and has fallen into the bosom of the believer, so that, assured of his pardon, he already enjoys a great peace.

3. *Outward*, in the view of men, all that appears is a new obedience. Human eyes cannot penetrate heaven to learn whether your sins are blotted out from the book of judgment,—cannot penetrate even into your heart to know whether you are in secret reconciled to God through the death of his Son; but human eyes, excluded from these secret things, pry all the more keenly into that which lies within their reach,—your spirit and life in the world. The world seizes a divine weapon that lies at hand,—"By their fruits ye shall know them,"—and wields it with a will, to test the various professions of the Church.

For one thing, brethren, if we be true, and truly leaning on Christ, we should not very much regret this, nor loudly complain of it. Granted that the scrutiny is sometimes carried to an excess, and in a hostile spirit,—

granted that under the power of prejudice they often pronounce unjust judgment,—still, on the whole, it is safer for us to be exposed to such testings. The same Lord who permits the winter frost and wind to search our bodily weakness, and impart bodily strength, permits a world keen and biting like a north wind to compass Christians about, and will make it all work together for good. That blast which comes searching for a weak point in your character, in order to enter and rend all away, will be overruled by its seeking for the weakness to remove it, and make the place strong. "The poor ye have always with you," said the Lord to his disciples. Why? For their good. All things in his administration are for their sakes, for their good,—to exercise them in love, and pity, and benevolent deeds. The jealous, unbelieving, unfair world ye have always around you, watching whom it may assail and devour. Why, all things are for your sakes; and this north wind, beating hard upon the disciples' brows, will improve the health of their holiness, and fit them for greater usefulness to God and to men. "Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."

The design of this meditation, from first to last, has been to magnify the mercy of God; but every additional glory that is seen in it magnifies the guilt and danger of all who neglect or despise it. Has God given us such a Saviour, and have we left him stretching out his hands to us in vain? "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" God has, in infinite compassion, provided a

life to set over against ours when it was forfeited,—a life divine, that spreads over all finite life, and goes beyond it to infinitude; and poured out that life, for our life a substitute; and opened the door of heaven, and left it standing all through the day of time with the invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come: the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." And when the door is shut, what will become of the despisers who would none of him? In very proportion to the fulness of the measure of mercy from God in the day of grace will be the justness of their exclusion in the day of judgment.

XVIII.

The Acceptable Year of the Lord.

"*To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*"—LUKE iv. 19–21.

EVERYTHING about this diet of worship is full of interest. The town, Nazareth, where he had been brought up, where every townsman knew the carpenter's son by sight; the house, a synagogue, the worshipping place of a Jewish congregation; the time, the holy Sabbath; the preacher, the Son of God in our nature; the sermon, an exhibition and an offer of Christ personally as the fulfilment of prophecy, the desire of the nation, the Saviour of the world; the reception of the discourse, the fastening of all eyes on the speaker's countenance, the opening of their ears and hearts to his word. We draw near and listen to this inspired sermon on an inspired text. Here is a greater sight than Moses saw in the wilderness of Sinai,—a phenomenon harder to be understood than a bush burning

yet not consumed. Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. The speaker speaks as never man spake. He was at once the preacher of salvation and the salvation that he preached —himself the sower and himself the seed.

Passing over the other features of the incident, I select one, somewhat difficult, indeed, but deeply interesting and eminently suggestive, as the ground of instruction and reproof to-day. In the prophecy, Isaiah lxi. 1–3, the word runs—"To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God;" whereas Jesus, when he read the passage in the synagogue at Nazareth, stopped short in the middle of the sentence, announcing the year of mercy, but not naming the day of vengeance. Isaiah proclaims in one breath both the goodness and severity of God, thus presenting the divine character complete, by revealing it on both sides; but Jesus read the prophet's testimony regarding the goodness, and then closed the book, hiding the severity under the parchment folds. He preached on one half of a clause; did he intend to conceal the harsher portion of prophecy—to cover with a veil the frowns that gather on the Father's countenance, and permit only the smiles to shine through on men? No. He came not to destroy or mutilate the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of this word, till all be fulfilled. Let us try to find out why the omission was made, and what the omission means.

It is clear, in the first place, that Isaiah saw the justice as well as the mercy of God, and bare witness impartially of both. Looking, in the spirit of prophecy, down through the ages to the fulness of time, he discerned Mercy approaching in the foreground, and Vengeance pressing hard behind. He knew and taught that there is a period during which, for every man, the door of grace is open, and a moment when that door will be shut. Such is the gospel according to Isaiah. It is not a one-sided, crippled thing. It has two feet to stand on, and therefore it stands secure. It is able both to bear the weight of those who lean upon it, and to withstand the assaults of those who attempt to overturn it. Isaiah's God is a just God and a Saviour.

There is a gospel not according to Isaiah, which is at present in some quarters softly creeping into favour. It is commonly called the negative theology,—a theology, as its name indicates, with a great many noes in it. It teaches that human nature, the patient, is not so radically diseased as the popular creed represents it to be: the cure does not demand so much power and wisdom as we have been taught to suppose: the sacrifice of Christ was not required as a satisfaction to divine justice, and his death on the cross had not so deep a meaning as is commonly assigned to it: the Scriptures are not all, or at least not all equally, the inspired Word of God, and the harsher portions of them must not be explained too strictly: God is not a stern Judge, but a Father; and fatherliness means fondness, softness. Thus, by intro-

ducing a string of negatives into the gospel, they contrive to rub its sharpest corners off, and leave a figure more like the dim, beautiful outline of the changeful clouds, on whose edges you might fall without being hurt, than the stern summits of the everlasting hills, whereon, if a man fall, he will be broken to pieces. By taking the gospel of the Scriptures, eliminating from it everything that offended their taste, they have constructed a gospel which seems beautiful in their eyes, and is smooth and agreeable to the touch; but it is not the gospel of Christ. It is not coarse and loathsome, like the idols of the heathen or of Rome; it is not made of gold or silver, wood or stone—its matter and its mould are more refined and spiritual: nevertheless it is an idol; the workman made it, therefore it is not God. Granted that this gospel is soft and seemly; what then? it will not sustain a sinner in the hour of his extremity. When you fall, and its arms are opened to receive you, you will sink through them, as through a shadow. It will not in the least degree break the fall of the lost sinner in the day of wrath.

Here the question recurs, Does not our text countenance this system of selecting from the Scriptures what is soft and easy, leaving out the features that bear hard on man? Jesus, when the Book of Isaiah was presented to him, open and marked at this place, read on till he came to "the day of vengeance of our God," and stopped when he came to that terror. He preached on the softer clause, without so much as intimating that a harder lay

behind. Let us look into this matter; we must at the same time make a minute inspection of the text, and a general survey of the analogy of faith.

Isaiah stood afar off, and, with an eye divinely opened for the purpose, looked down the avenue of the future, as one might stand upon a mountain far inland and look along a straight narrow estuary away to the distant sea, dimly visible on the furthest horizon. At the extremity of the vista, and distant so far in time that to him they seemed to lie within eternity, he descried two lights, one behind the other, and both approaching. To his countrymen below, not elevated to his standpoint, and therefore not enjoying his view—to his countrymen below, who sent up at intervals the question, Watchman, what of the night? the watchman answered, I see two lights approaching from the ocean—from the eternity, coming hitherward along the channel of time, the one before the other, and both steadily advancing: the foremost is divine mercy, and the one behind it is divine wrath. That faithful witness faithfully proclaimed from his watch-tower to his countrymen both facts: first, that God's mercy is coming, mercy infinite and free, with its blessed motto, "Whosoever will," waving in the wind, coming foremost, nearest us; and second, that on the heels of mercy, vengeance was following close, swallowing up in everlasting doom alike the bold adversary who had despised mercy, and the indolent lingerer who had permitted it to pass.

When that witness had served his generation and fallen

asleep, others were successively placed on the same watch-tower to reduplicate the same warning from age to age. To those two facts which Isaiah proclaimed bore all the prophets witness: mercy is coming first, and judgment follows. Last of all came Christ, in the fulness of time, and, exercising himself the office of a prophet, stood where Isaiah had stood, repeating Isaiah's testimony. But now the foremost of the two lights had come up. It was abreast of the watchman. Turning to look full upon the one that had come, he sees not the one that is coming. In the lips of Jesus the testimony is not a prediction of what shall be, but a proclamation of what is. The "acceptable year of the Lord" had arrived, but the "day of vengeance of our God" had not. The mission of Christ was not to point to another, but to attract to himself. When the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on him, he said, "This day these things are fulfilled in your ears." He meant to present himself to the people as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, and therefore he could not include the day of vengeance; for on that day that part of the prophecy was not fulfilled. He came not to condemn the world, but to save; while he sat in the synagogue, and their eyes beheld him, the day of vengeance had not come to them.

This prophecy is not of private interpretation; it was not exhausted that day in Nazareth. This word, like the Lord who uttered it, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. As the same sun shines over our heads to-day that gave light to those Nazarene citizens in their

synagogue, the same word which fell on their ears is spirit and life for us to-day. The acceptable year of the Lord has come. Christ is the way to the Father. The door is open, and the invitation resounds through this prison-house—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The purpose of the Lord that day in his discourse—the purpose of the Lord in taking our nature—was to open, to be, the way unto the Father. He did not mix a little of the vengeance among the mercy, to make the mercy less sweet; he did not dash the door of vengeance in the faces of those whom he was inviting to enter through mercy into peace. This preacher did not mix the two, and so spoil both. He gives each its own place and time, but leaves each complete. He keeps the door of mercy wide open—he welcomes chief sinners in; but when that year of acceptance has run out, the day of vengeance will come.

Of that day, and of its sure, sudden approach, Jesus often and clearly warned his disciples. "Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me." No clearer sound than this ever descended from heaven to earth; no more articulate sentence was ever uttered even by Him who spake as never man spake. Christ preached the day of vengeance, but he preached it always in the future tense. That day came not before him, and came not with him; it came after him. "Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall

see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark xiv. 61, 62). His coming for judgment was a Future; his presence as Redeemer was a Now.

The covenant endures for ever; the door stands open all the course of time. Every generation enjoys its own day of grace; but after each generation the night cometh. Behind mercy, vengeance comes, as night sweeps round the globe in the wake of day, and winter in the wake of summer. Upon every person and every place the night cometh, in which no man can work; but every person and every place enjoy a day before the night comes on; a day in which all needful work may be done—should be done. A winter overtakes every land; but every land enjoys its summer and its autumn, so that all the willing and wakeful might sow and reap. Those who sow in spring and reap in harvest need not fear the approaching winter. He who spread out the beautiful broad day, and kept encroaching darkness off till all its hours had run—he who gave to the world the wider expanse of summer, and kept the winter at bay till the fruits of the earth were gathered—has set open, and kept open, the door of mercy, and neither man nor angel can shut it before the time. The sea cannot close and cover the path until Israel have passed over. But when all God's people have gotten grace, and all the world have gotten the offer of it, the restraining hand is withdrawn. Then vengeance comes—then the door is shut.

Here, then, is the lesson for ourselves. A space filled

with mercy lies before us; a heaven filled with love like sunlight is shining over us. But this, like the day or the summer, will soon come to an end. Observe how light and darkness follow each other on the surface of the earth. While we slept last night in the darkness, in China there was light; and in China at this moment the darkness has quenched the day, while our sun is still shining. They enjoyed their day, but are now in darkness; we enjoy the day now, but the night will overtake us soon. Thus the time of mercy and the time of vengeance follow each other along the generations of men. Behold, now is our accepted time; behold, now is our day of salvation. On us the light of love is shining; but the Sun that sheds it will soon set on us, to rise on those that come after us. If we turn a deaf ear to the Saviour's cry until his day is done, when the night cometh that cry will never again be heard. Our place is like Lot's, when, hurried by the angel's hand, he was fleeing to the mountain, hearing already the flames of judgment crackling behind him on the plain. It is not a mixture of mercy and anger that we must meet, and pass through. The God with whom we have to do has not for us just as much tenderness as will suffice to make his anger tolerable, and just as much anger as will suffice to take all the enjoyment out of his mercy. The testimony of Christ when he came to reveal the Father is not Yea, yea, and Nay, nay. His mercy in Christ is free, full, infinite, with no admixture of vengeance in it: his vengeance for all on whom it falls is omnipotent and endur-

ing. There is *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; and there will be *then* no favour for them who are not. Day is very bright, and night is very gloomy; life is very lively, and death is very dead. Each is perfect according to its kind; each stands alone and separate from the other. Both are very sure—sure as the day and the night. One thing at a time for every sinner of the human race, and no commingling or confusion of the two. While Jesus presents himself to us according to the Scriptures, as he did to the congregation at Nazareth, it is the acceptable year of the Lord; when he withdraws himself, or puts us out of his sight, it is the day of vengeance. The absence of the sun is night; no other operation is necessary to bring it on. When a soul, or a world, has no longer a Saviour within reach, then and thereby the day of vengeance has fully come.

In the bold and sublime imagery of Ezekiel, the man clothed with linen, which had a writer's ink-horn by his side, represents our merciful High Priest and Mediator. He enters and goes through Jerusalem first alone, the men with the destroying weapons in their hands being meanwhile kept standing at a distance as onlookers. The messenger of mercy goes through the city, and sets "a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye in after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity," &c. (Ezek. ix. 4, 5.) Ah! God has said, "Vengeance is mine;" and here he

has sent it to execute his purpose. As long as the linen-clothed man was walking about Jerusalem, inviting its multitudes and marking his own, it was the acceptable year of the Lord; but on his withdrawal, without hesitation and without interval, the day of vengeance came on. Christ is the sun of our firmament: in his presence there is no darkness, in his absence there is no light.

Let no man fondly imagine that vengeance will not come because Christ did not on this occasion proclaim it. He came to preach mercy: mercy, if he had not brought it, would not have come. But vengeance!—when Christ departs, vengeance is. His coming is mercy; his going, wrath. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37). Here is love, and love only, preached by Jesus. But is there no vengeance because he did not then and there declare it? Ah! wherefore that cry? Why should he, who is the well-beloved of the Father, and the heir of all things, cry as if his heart were breaking while he published peace? Because he knows that they who neglect this salvation cannot escape. It is because he knows the terrors of the Lord that he cries so vehemently to persuade men. The High Priest has come to the front while the armies of Israel halt on the bank of the overflowing Jordan. The High Priest has stepped into the water: the waters, as soon as they felt his touch, have stood up like a heap above, and fallen away to the salt sea below. As long as he stands in the middle of the river's bed, a dry path lies

open for the thousands of Israel to pass over. When he goes away, without any proclamation or flourish of trumpets, the flood silently, swiftly sweeps along its bed again, overwhelming every wretched straggler who allowed his opportunity to pass. After him, the slayers slay. Fallen angels, who never got a day of grace, and unbelieving men, who have neglected it, will be left without when the door is shut.

Those who confide in God's mercy have good cause to cherish the remembrance of his terrible righteousness; for the Father's love loses half its sweetness when the children begin to entertain the conception that he is incapable of anger. How shall I love and praise him for his tenderness if he has nothing else, and is nothing else?

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord." When? When they had experienced for themselves his redeeming love, and seen his vengeance surging over the path that they had lately trodden. If the fleeing Hebrews and the pursuing Egyptians had both passed through the sea with equal safety, no hymn of praise to God would have awakened that day the echoes of the wilderness. Mercy would not be sweet, would not be mercy, if vengeance did not follow in its wake. Mercy is tasteless as the white of an egg until it is salted with the fire of righteousness. With this fire Christ our sacrifice was salted when he bore transgression and made an end of sin.

If you were a feeble fugitive running for your life,

while an enemy—dreaded wild beast, or more dreaded man—in close pursuit, was gaining on your steps, what would you best like to see stretching athwart the plain before you? A high frowning wall? No. What, then? An open door. But an open door cannot be unless there is a frowning wall. A wall, with a door in it open: this, and this only, is salvation to the trembling fugitive.

All things in God's covenant and in his providence work together for good to his people. His anger apprehended, conspires with other forces to make me hide in his love; and the love in which I hide tastes more sweetly when I hear the echoes of a vengeance that is past, still grumbling through the distant sky. "I will sing of mercy and of judgment," said one who well understood both. But if there were no judgment, there would be no song about mercy; there would be no mercy to sing about.

The time of acceptance is called a "year;" the time of vengeance, a "day." The door may stand long open, but it does not take a long time to shut it. Alas! the experience of living men is all on one side; and we are slow to learn, where we have no experience to guide us. We have for many years seen the door open: it has never yet been shut in our face, and we scarcely believe, with a real, effective belief, that it will ever be shut. If it shuts on us, and shuts us out, we shall then know what shutting the door means. But the lesson will be learned too late. To teach this difficult but necessary lesson, and to teach it in time, the Lord for once partially with-

drew the veil, and revealed a glimpse of the unseen world in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man lifted up his eyes in torment, he at last believed in the shutting of the door—believed and trembled. I think, if some who now carelessly count that to-morrow shall be as this day, had been with me in some of the steps of my experience as a minister, they would have gotten the needful lesson burned into their minds as if branded in by a hot iron. The eager request for more days that I have heard, uttered in broken fragments, by husky groans, when the breath of life was failing—more days to remedy the error of a lost life—uttered in an agony of earnestness, yet uttered in vain, might teach us as effectually to occupy the present as if one should rise from the dead to undertake the task.

"What thou doest, do quickly," said Jesus to the betrayer. The same word he speaks to the truster—"quickly!" If any one should still cling to the old fond expectation—Jesus will not be so hard-hearted as to shut the door; I answer, Jesus will not be so hard-hearted as to leave it open. He is pledged to his own to shut them in—pledged to admit nothing that defileth. If there were no vengeance on those who are without, there could be no love to those who are within.

XIX.

Who Knocks?

"*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*"—REVELATION iii. 20.

LATE in the autumn, at dawn of day, you stand on a hill top, and cast your eye as far as the horizon along the valley that sleeps below. A pure white mist covers the whole plain, while here and there an eminence stands out like an island in the sea, and the mountains, covered half way up, stretch along the opposite side like a steep and rugged shore. All the more conspicuous and vivid seem the insular patches of visible ground, that the surrounding landscape is submerged beneath the placid milky sea. While your eye rests on these protruding spots, you know right well that all the surrounding space is dry ground, and will appear in fertility and beauty as soon as the covering mist shall have cleared away. The land is there, although for the present it is hidden from view, and when the sun is up it will show itself.

This book of Scripture is such a valley at such a time. A veil, only partially and faintly transparent, hangs over its main bulk; but through the veil, even while it remains, some solid spots stand out distinctly visible, and soon the sun, rising in his strength, will roll back the covering, and display the whole landscape. God's ways are in the deep, his footsteps are not known. His goings, however, are glorious all the while, although we cannot trace their windings. "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." This cloud-covered valley will one day emerge into view; this prophecy will become a history. We shall better understand the Designer's meaning when his work is done.

There is some ground to hope that even now the beginning of the end approaches. The stupendous progress of our own generation has gone far to prepare the way of the Lord. Events emerging now, or their successors germinating as thoughts in human hearts, may rend the veil of prophecy, and make bare the Almighty Arm, that we may behold its work.

In the meantime, while we wait for the development of the divine purpose in the fulness of time, we need not wait in idleness. We may now plant a firm foot on those portions of the field that are already visible. They are raised above the mist, that we may take immediate possession. You may read the signal displayed from these heights of the Apocalypse: Occupy these visible portions of the Word, till the Lord come to uncover the now concealed mysteries of his providence and his covenant.

We need not wait for the end of the dispensation, in order to obtain sure and direct instruction and reproof from this book of Scripture. These epistles to the Churches are written in the vernacular of all lands and all times. They contain messages from the Lord to the Lord's people on the earth. Those messages are not of any private interpretation. They are meant, like the sunlight, to fall in every latitude, and to stream down with quickening power on every generation of mankind. Well may we adopt, as we read them, the expression of the disciple's glad surprise, "Lord, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb." In these letters to the Churches, the types are employed for mercy, and not for judgment. They are glasses, rather than veils. They are fitted to display rather than to conceal the writer's meaning. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," &c. A metaphor, indeed, throughout; but a metaphor that helps the humblest reader to apprehend and retain the sense.

Let us now take this transparent word of the Lord into our hands, and apply it honestly to our hearts and lives.

1. *Who stands?*—An ancient patriarch, by keeping open heart and open house for strangers, was privileged to entertain angels unawares. This day we may obtain a visit of the Lord of angels, if only we will let him in. He who stands and knocks at our door is the Mediator of the covenant, God with us. Without him was not any thing made that was made. From hour to hour he is

upholding all worlds by his hand, and writing all human history in his book. He has received authority to rule the world in its course, and to judge it when that course is done. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. He is holy; but they are not the holy whom he came to seek. He pitied the unholy, and gave himself for them. He took our nature, that he might bear our sin, and deliver us from its curse. He became the way for the prodigal's return to the Father: to-day he keeps the way open, and beckons the lost to hasten in.

2. *How near he comes.*—"Behold, I stand at the door." He has bowed his heavens and come down. We are not left to cry in despair, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above). The Word—the Word who was with God, and is God—the Word who makes known the Father, is nigh thee, even in thy mouth. The Good Shepherd has left the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and followed this one wandering world. He has come very close to us—has become bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh. We are not much moved by anything that is far distant. Whether the visitant be coming for judgment or mercy, we take the matter lightly, as long as he is far away. A distant enemy does not make us tremble,—a distant friend fails to make us glad. A whole army of enemies, many hundred miles distant, does not disturb our rest; but a single thief, known to be in the neighbourhood, may cause a sleepless night. When your protector is distant, you tremble at danger; when he is near, you breathe freely again.

How near the Son of God has come to us! He is our Brother: he touches us, and we touch him, at all points. He knows all our hopes and fears. He wept with sorrowing sisters beside a brother's grave, and wept over a guilty Jerusalem. He sighed like ourselves when sorrow lay on his heart, and was in agony when the sin of his people lay on his soul. How closely he comes into every thought of a human heart!—as closely as the sun gets into the bosom of every flower,—as closely as the air clasps every part of the earth and sea.

3. *How far off he is kept.*—"At the door." The same expression tells both how near he comes to us, and how far we keep him away. He in great kindness comes *to the door;* we in great folly keep him *at the door.* The sunlight travels far from its source in the deep of heaven, —so far, that though it can be expressed in figures, the imagination fails to take in the magnitude of the sum; but when the rays of light have travelled unimpeded so far, and come to the door of my eye, if I shut that door —a thin film of flesh—the light is kept out, and I remain in darkness. Alas! the Light that travelled so far, and came so near—the Light that sought entrance into my heart, and that I kept out—was the Light of life! If I keep out that Light, I abide in the darkness of death: there is no salvation in any other. Here are two wonders: one, the Saviour's condescending love; the other, a sinner's self-destroying blindness. One wonder is, that the man keeps this visitor at the door; and another wonder is, that this visitor, kept at the door, does not go

away and leave the lost to perish. These two wonders seem equal, as the sky that you look down upon in the lake, and the sky that you look up to in the heavens, seem to be of equal depth. That we should refuse to let Jesus in, and that Jesus should not therefore instantly forsake us, are two wonders deep as the heavens both. Angels may desire, but will not be able to see, the bottom of either abyss.

4. *He knocks for entrance.*—It is more than the kindness of his coming and the patience of his waiting. Besides coming near, he calls aloud: he does not permit us to forget his presence.

To live without Christ in the world is not a sin of simple neglect: it is the sin of refusing his offer, and turning a deaf ear to his call. Although a messenger were at the door bearing the King's commands to you, if he stood silent there, the guilt of neglect would be less. But silent this heavenly messenger does not stand. He has many ways of knocking, so as to make our house ring about our ears. By these words that I now speak, your Lord is knocking at the door of your heart. Each word, though spoken by a fellow-creature's lips, is a stroke on your conscience by the dying love of Christ, to awaken, to arouse you. When an illness comes, there is a knock; and when a friend dies, there is another. Sometimes these resound long in an empty, aching heart. The conversion of neighbours, especially if the awakening be sudden, and the awakened numerous, is another kind of knocking. Every case of a careless or

profane person compelled to cry, "What must I do to be saved?" becomes a startling sound, reverberating through the hollow, uneasy chambers of your soul, and calling on you to turn and live. This is a method of knocking which the Lord has frequently and with great power employed of late years in the land. I have known secure and long-hardened worldlings awakened as it were by the sound of a going, when many of their neighbours were pressing in by the strait gate. They have been suddenly seized with a great dread lest all these should enter the kingdom, and the door be shut behind.

If two men are working together in the field, or two women grinding at the mill, and lightning from the sky strike one dead in a moment, the fact is an alarm of peculiar loudness to the one who is left. But there is a kind of knocking which, if less loud, is more deep—a knocking that seems to penetrate further into the conscience of the unconverted; and that is when of two persons who stood close together in one workshop, or one family, one is taken, not into sudden death by a lightning-stroke, but into sudden life by the quickening Spirit, and the other is left in cold, spiritual death. In such a case the unhappy survivor—that is, the one who remains where he was when his companion enters into peace with God—is sometimes smitten with such an overwhelming fear, that he cannot abide another day in the City of Destruction. He, too, arises and flees for his life.

Sometimes the sense of solitude is the knock which Jesus makes in order to gain admission. You are re-

moved while yet young from your country and kindred. Among the strangers, indeed, a house is provided; but it is not a home. Its walls seem a prison around you. No mother's hand places your food before you, and no father's voice blesses it. Your heart feels empty, and in the vacancy the slightest whisper resounds like thunder in the hills: the still small voice of Jesus, stifled long, and drowned by the din of a bustling world, is articulately heard at last, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will open, I will come in."

But there is no limit to the instruments that may be employed in the earlier stages of conversion—in the Spirit's ministry to convince, and awaken, and arouse. All are the servants of our Lord. He makes the winds his messengers, and flaming fire his ministers. The voices of nature may be employed to articulate Christ's call in a deaf ear. The crowing of a cock was the alarm that awakened Peter, when he seemed to have sunk into the sleep of death. That simple sound was Christ's knock at Peter's heart—a knock that roused the slumbering sentinel, and procured admission for the outraged but still compassionate guest.

A man who has sold himself to vanity, looks over the hedge as he hastens along the road, and sees the cattle grazing peacefully by day, meekly returning home at night: let the prodigal who is fleeing from his father think that other creatures fulfil the end of their being, while he is thwarting the gracious purpose of God and making his own perdition sure. You look upon the fields

when rain begins to fall after drought: the dry ground gladly drinks the water in, and hastily sends a white incense up to heaven—an offering of gratitude: let the sight remind you that your heart, although it is as dry and needy, does not thus willingly receive the Spirit from on high. Cast your eye upward on the clouds, and see them soaring, white and pure, on the bosom of the sky; and let that look carry home the terrible thought—Grovelling in the dust, impure, I am not fit to walk with God in white.

Knock! oh, all things knock at closed human hearts for the admission of their Lord. Death and life, angels, principalities and powers, things present and things to come, height and depth, and every other creature,—all unite in one long, loud cry, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

5. *Many things hinder the hearing.*—Christ's voice, although uttered at the door, is often not heard within. Other thoughts occupy the mind; other sounds occupy the ear. Either joy or grief may become a hindrance. The song of mirth and the wail of sorrow may both, by turns, drown the voice of that blessed Visitant who stands without and pleads for admission. I once went to a house in the country, to make a call of friendship. It was a bright afternoon at the close of an early harvest. I knocked at the door, and knocked again. No answer. As I stood, I began to observe the reason why my call was unheeded. A company was assembled within, and a joyous feast was going on. I heard them laughing; but they did not hear me knocking. I turned and went

away. The inmates of the house never knew that I had been at the door. They lost nothing by that, for I had nothing to give them; but He who knocks at our door to-day, has eternal life at his disposal, and he has come to bestow it: if we are so taken up with our company and our enjoyments as not to hear him, we perish in our sins. "Hear, and your soul shall live:" the other side of that word is,—If ye do not hear him, your soul shall die.

6. *Hear, and open.*—Hearing alone is not enough. Felix heard, did he not, in his deafest ear? The word of God, as spoken by Paul, rang like the stroke of doom through all the chambers of his guilty conscience: he heard, but did not open. When he heard God's voice without, he shut the door of his heart violently, and warned the visitor away. Ah, you will never open to let in an angry God! You must hear the voice of Jesus, and know the meaning of that blessed name,—"He saves his people from their sins." It is not the wrath of God, but his mercy in Christ, that melts the iron fastenings, and lifts up these shut gates, that the King of glory may come in. A benevolent Christian went once to a poor widow's door bearing in his hand the help which the poor widow sorely needed. He knocked loud and long, and went away at last without gaining admission. Why? Was the widow not within? She was. Asleep, perhaps, and therefore did not hear? No; she was wide awake, and heard all. She sat cowering on the floor with her naked, hungry children, neither making answer nor

opening. Why? She was in debt, and thought the knocker an officer come to claim from her what she had not to give. Oh, if she had known who was knocking, and why he knocked, she would have opened eagerly, and at the opening life would have flowed in. It is thus that the guilty refuse to open for Christ, even when they hear him knocking. They have hard thoughts of him. They think he comes to demand a righteousness which they cannot give, and to bind them over to the judgment because they cannot pay. God is love, and Christ is the outcome of his forgiving love to lost men. He comes to pardon sin, and give you righteousness. He comes to redeem you, and save you. It is when you know him thus that you will open at his call.

"*I will come in.*"—Ah, this is perhaps the secret reason why so few are willing to open! If he should offer to free from punishment, and open heaven at last, leaving every one to himself now, the carnal mind would more willingly open. It is his incoming and indwelling that are dreadful. People will open their church, or their confession of faith, to let Christ in; but into their heart they are not willing to admit him, until they become also willing to part with all that Christ hates. When he comes into his temple, the buyers and sellers who possess and pollute it will be driven out before him. His terms are, that when he comes in, vice and vanity must depart. Agree to his terms, my brother. Answer him, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"*If any man open, I will come in.*"—These are the

terms. Although He who stands at the door has all power in heaven and on earth, he will not force his way in. This is clearly intimated by the very fact that he stands, and knocks. Unless the heart is opened spontaneously from within, it is never opened.

It is a very solemnizing thought, that in the first instance our need of Christ is the very thing that induces us to reject Christ. It is the sinfulness of man that makes a Saviour necessary; but it is that same sinfulness that makes the Saviour whom God has sent unwelcome. Because we are in a condition that needs a divine Redeemer, we refuse the divine Redeemer when he comes. It is the natural aversion of the unholy to the holy one.

When the word of God is pressed on the unclean conscience—when this word is effectual to the extent of compelling the man to look to his own guilt and to God's righteousness, a great weight presses upon the man, but it does not induce him to open and admit the power that presses for admittance. In this respect there is a remarkable analogy between the gates of a human heart and the gates of a lock on a canal. Here is the lock: it is a great empty room. At its upper end are huge folding-doors shut. Outside of these doors a great body of water presses steadily, heavily on. Shall we open the doors to admit the pressing water? Try. Here are long strong arms attached to the gates, for the purpose of moving them. Send fifty men to draw—send a hundred: they pull at these lever arms with all their might, but the doors do not open by a hairsbreadth.

Why? Are they clasped together by iron chains? No; in that respect they are absolutely free. In their construction no provision is made for any kind of fastening. They simply touch each other. What holds them then? It is the great, lofty, deep body of water, pressing to get in, that keeps the gates so inexorably shut. Empty the great chamber of the lock remains although the gates are left loose, because the weight of the water outside closes the gates far more effectually than clasps of iron. Because the chamber is empty it needs to be filled; but because the chamber is empty it will not, cannot open its doors to admit the pressing water.

Behold the picture of an alienated human heart—empty and dreary for want of the indwelling of God a Spirit—with God in Emmanuel now come nigh, and offering, pressing to come in and possess the empty space, to satisfy again the weary prodigal; yet that prodigal keeping his heart closed, although it is the Father of his spirit who is offering to come in—nay, keeping resolutely shut precisely because the Father of his spirit is seeking to come in. What then? Shall this dead lock last for ever? Will the human heart, because it is empty and alienated, for ever keep out, as by a law of its nature, that waiting, inviting Redeemer, whom it needs and yet dreads? No; many hearts are opening and admitting Christ. And we observe that although great forces come into play—man resisting on the one side, and his Saviour pressing on the other—we observe that when the door is opened at last, the process is a soft and gentle movement

The kingdom of God, when it comes at length, cometh not with observation. It is not the thunder and the earthquake, but the still small voice.

How is the door of the lock at length opened? Not by any vast mechanical pressure that overcomes the pressure of the water. In the secret depths of that hollow chamber, through channels skilfully and for a purpose constructed there from the first, the water is gradually admitted. The water which the closed door kept out springs up within and fills up by degrees the emptiness. The water which while outside pressed the door shut, now that it is inside leaves the door free to open; and oh, how easy it is to open these two-leaved gates, when the water behind them and within is as high as the water before them and without!

In a similar way is the closed heart opened to Christ. The love of Christ, seeking its way like water, oozes in through secret openings,—gradually more and more makes its way within; and when the heart is well filled with Christ inside, it no longer refuses to open for Christ. It is, after all, Christ that opens his own way in; and yet the man opens. When the Saviour has sent in much sense of his compassion to swell up within the once empty soul, the force of resistance gives way. The presence of Christ saying, "Open to me," no longer locks the door. To that presence now the door gently opens; because in secret the soul has already been tasting that the Lord is gracious.

XX.

The Two Tabernacles.

"*We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*"—2 CORINTHIANS v. 4.

T is through the gospel that life and immortality have been brought to light. Beyond the range of revelation these subjects lie in the deepest darkness. A feeble, fluttering guess, was all that unaided men could ever reach regarding a life beyond the grave. Some dim, indefinite consciousness of a higher destiny, may tremble in the immortal spirit; but in the absence of a light from heaven, there is no distinct vision, no sustaining hope. A jar may be charged with electric fire, and capable, in certain circumstances, of giving forth light and heat; yet if it remain isolated, all is dull and dark, and silent. You cannot distinguish that charged, susceptible vessel, from another of similar shape and size that is not so charged. When a certain sharp point is brought near the susceptible vessel, sparks of living light are emitted; whereas, though the same sharp

point is brought near the other vessel, all will remain dark and dead as before. Thus there is in a human spirit a susceptibility and a capacity which lies dormant, indeed, as long as man is left to himself, but which leaps into life as soon as the word of God is pointed to the heart. The love of Christ kindles in a human breast the blessed hope of immortality; but it is only in a human breast that even the love of Christ could generate such a flame. We are low; but even in our depths we possess a constitution that is capable of being elevated; and the gospel of grace contains and exerts the power which prevails to quicken the dead, and reconcile the alienated. The fallen have no hope in themselves; but even to the fallen the gospel brings glad tidings of great joy.

In the preaching of Christ and his apostles the world is represented as a wilderness, and human-kind as pilgrims passing through it. No other book than the Bible treats men thus. It has courage and faithfulness to tell us the truth. If you surrender yourself to its guidance, you must walk as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth; you must repeat over again Israel's wandering from the Egypt of this world to the rest that lies beyond the swellings of Jordan.

This is one reason why worldly minds dislike the Bible. It is like death and the grave to them, because it brings them alongside of eternity, and keeps them there. The Unseen converses with them through the pages of that book, and compels them to feel that the veil which separates them from the judgment-seat is as

thin as the leaves on which the letters lie. This is not a pleasant position for one who is unforgiven, unreconciled. The fool says in his heart, "No God." Those who are not at peace with God are not at home in the Bible.

Let us examine the text word by word, that we may ascertain its meaning, and submit our hearts to its power.

"*Tabernacle*" is a frail, temporary dwelling, generally of cloth, which men make for shelter by night, when they expect to be so short a time in the place that it is not worth while to erect a more substantial edifice. The Hebrews in the wilderness dwelt in tents, shifting their encampment from day to day. Travellers and soldiers use them still. A few posts, a few cords, and a few pieces of cloth constitute the dwelling. It is easily set up, and easily taken down again.

The body is frequently compared to a tent. It is very beautiful, but very frail. Here we come abreast of an unfathomable mystery. Seeing it is made so perfect, why is it made so feeble? All the skill of all the world could not make even a tolerable imitation of its mechanism; and yet the prick of a pin will turn it into dust. It is as glorious as the starry sky, and yet as fading as a summer flower. Perhaps the power and providence of God are more vividly displayed in the human body as it has been constituted, than they would have been by structures less liable to injury and decay. An infant in a dark and dangerous path dare not stir from his father's side; whereas a robust youth may select his own route, and return at his own time. Our Father in heaven

knows that it is difficult to keep his children close to himself as matters stand. I suppose it would have been still more difficult if the child had been intrusted with greater power. The age of the antediluvians seems to have encouraged them in their rebellion. Humanity in its first stage, enjoying a larger liberty, showed itself a wild beast; in the second stage it was held more shortly by the head. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. The tendency to rebellion must be persistent and strong, when a creature so feeble attempts to cast the Creator's cords away.

On the other hand, when the spirit of a dear child has through Christ been attained, the frailty of the truster makes the trust more sweet. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Perhaps we may also throw out the suggestion, that though the mere frailty of one habitation would not prove to its inmate that a more solid mansion was prepared for his use, yet if we know that the abiding home is ready, the shaking of the temporary tabernacle under which we are getting shelter to-day will contribute to remind us of another rest, and quicken our desire for an abundant entrance on its blessedness.

"*This* tabernacle."—The house in which we now dwell is not our only dwelling-place. In the context a comparison is expressly instituted between two successive residences. The design of the Spirit in this word is to preserve us from bestowing all our regard on this tabernacle while another is more worthy. "We that are in this

tabernacle do groan:"—the conception which answers to this intimation as an echo to a sound is, there are some not in this tabernacle, but in another, and groaning is not their occupation to-day. We occupy this tabernacle to-day; but to-morrow we may own a more princely mansion. Nor does the Scripture spread out before us an indefinite series of changes. To them that are in Christ Jesus, after one change all will be fixed for ever. Those who go in by the gate into the City of God shall go no more out. When the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "Blessed are the home-sick, for they shall get home." Sweet home!

"*Burdened.*"—There may be some who, for a time, could scarcely recognize this as a description of their own condition. The young, healthy, and prosperous, are comparatively free from the pressure of a heavy load. Their hearts for a time are as light as their limbs. They trip along life as if they were chasing butterflies in a flowery meadow. To a certain extent, and for a certain period, this is not the creature's sin, but the Creator's kind appointment. The cares of age laid on the heart of a child would crush his spirit, and render him incapable of fulfilling his task when he should come of age. In mercy to men, a certain brightness is permitted to hover on the horizon during the early morning of life's day; for if the blossom did not open, the fruit would never swell: but even in childhood some weights begin to press, and when

youth has passed, they constitute a great and perpetual burden, which will not drop off till the burden and its bearer drop together into the grave. The cares of house and children, of business and company, of friendships and enmities, increase and multiply until the beams of the tabernacle are creaking prematurely under the accumulated weight.

These burdens are useful. They may be inventoried among the "all things" that work together for good. They are the weary who can truly long for rest, or truly enjoy it when it comes. The sorrows of earth will enhance the joys of heaven. Not that human sufferings in any measure or degree can purchase a right to reward in the great day; but if an abundant entrance is secured through faith in Christ, the rugged rocks and scorching sand of the desert will make the glassy, golden streets of the New Jerusalem, feel more smooth beneath the pilgrim's feet.

In one sense the heaviest part of the burden which we bear in this tabernacle is our own sin. Here, however, the apostle, I think, is not speaking of guilt still defiling the conscience. Sin, as to its curse and doom, has for these pilgrims been wholly taken away. Indeed, while sin is not forgiven, the sinful, as a general rule, are not much burdened by its weight. It is when sin is forgiven that the sinner most bitterly complains of his sin. Strange, yet divinely true, it is when Christ has taken, or is taking sin away, that the Christian feels it lying heavy on his heart. The conscience, now tender, is greatly

disturbed by its defiling presence, although its condemnation has been entirely removed. "The body of this death," even though its spirit is cast out, constitutes for Christ's redeemed the weightiest portion of the burden under which they groan.

"We *groan.*"—A groan is nature's outlet for grief. In some kinds of disease, to forbid a groan would sensibly add to the patient's suffering. It indicates also a desire for relief. Its double meaning is, I suffer, and would fain be free.

This desire does not by itself constitute a mark of grace. It belongs to nature, and is often experienced in great strength where there is no spiritual light or life. The discontented make many changes in order to escape from suffering; but the suffering follows them into every sphere. A master may dismiss his servant against whom his anger was stirred, but he has not thereby been delivered from the disturber of his peace. His own irritable temper remains, a tenant on a long lease, defying all his impotent processes of ejection. Mere groans are not sure marks of grace. Some are weary of this world who are by no means ready for the next.

"*Not that we would be unclothed.*"—Mark this. To be unclothed means to put off this tabernacle. It means to die, and return to corruption in the grave. Even Paul, after he had attained triumphant faith and blessed hope, shrinks from the dissolution of the body. Even this man, who knew right well that a crown of righteousness was ready for his head, starts at the cold image of Death, and

distinctly intimates that the prospect is unpleasant: "But we have no wish for the unclothing." I like this; this is good for me. I learn here that positive love of closing with the King of Terrors is not a necessary mark of Christ's redeemed people. Some of them at some period may have been brought into such a state of mind, but this is not a characteristic which every believer must always possess.

I love this warm life. I shrink from death. And therein I think I do not sin. God is not displeased with me for loving that which he has bestowed. If by faith in his Son, and through the ministry of his Spirit, he make me willing to give it up when he recalls it, enough: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." But this warm clothing which he has wrapped round my life—he does not expect that I should at this moment wish it away.

Christians love life for many reasons. They love it, first of all, not as Christians, but as sentient beings. They love it in common with those who know not Christ, but who see the sunlight, and feel the balmy air, and tread the flowery ground. They love it in common not only with their fellow-men, but in common with the brutes that perish. They love life in common with the cattle that browse on the meadows, and the birds that warble in the trees, and the insects that flutter in the sunbeam. But Christians love life with a deeper, more intelligent love than other creatures, because the gifts which are in their own nature sweet, are sweeter when they are received from a Father's hand.

It is a mistake to suppose that the worldly enjoy their portion here, and that the disciples of Christ permit their religion to imbitter all the sweets of earth, postponing the prospect of enjoyment until they pass through the gates of the grave into a future and distant heaven. This is a mischievous error. Those who hope in Christ for the world to come, enjoy the world that now is better because of that hope. The society of friends, the shelter of home, the sleep of night, the dawn of morning, the daily bread, the draught of cool water in the noon-day toil,—all these good things are sweeter to the man who has a better portion behind them than they are to the man who has nothing else.

The disciples of Jesus enjoy this life, moreover, as a field of useful labour. Work may be done here which cannot be done beyond the boundary of the present life. They who are bought with a price delight to serve the Lord who bought them; and this is the place where the work of the kingdom must be done.

"*But clothed upon.*"—This disciple fully comprehends and clearly expresses what he likes and what he does not like in connection with living and dying. He is well aware, indeed, that the "unclothing" comes between him and the blessed immortality. He is willing to meet the necessity of putting off "this mortal coil." for the sake of the glory that shall follow; but he frankly confesses that the act of putting off is not agreeable. He does not refuse that process of stripping, but he tells us plainly that he does not like it. He not only submits to it—he

bounds forward to meet it joyfully; but the cause of this buoyancy is a love, not of the fire and water of the passage, but of the large place to which the passage leads.

"That mortality might be *swallowed up of life*."—The dead seem to be swallowed up when they are laid in the grave, or dropped over the ship's side into the sea. Earth and sea must yet give up their dead; but in the first instance, and for a time, they swallow, they devour their victims.

Now, as the dead are swallowed up by the sea when they sink in it, *death* itself will one day be swallowed up. Who or what will devour the devourer? LIFE.

Christ has said in express terms, "I am the resurrection, and the life." They who fall asleep in Jesus drop, in the very act of dying, into the life eternal. Mortality—the liability to death—even the capability of dying—will, to the redeemed, be lost, as the bodies of the dead who died at sea are lost in the abyss. Death is swallowed up—is lost in life. The dying day of a Christian is his birth-day; the departure is the entrance. The passage may be dark and narrow, but it leads into life. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

"Jesus, draw this heart of mine
Daily, hourly towards thine.
Longing, looking, thus I'll seek thee;
And, in seeking, hope to meet thee:
Meeting thee, rejoice at last;
And, rejoicing, hold thee fast,
Till, beyond the grave, I see
Thee in heaven, and heaven in thee."

XXI.

"Fruitful in every Good Work."

"*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.*"—COLOSSIANS i. 10.

THE text is a single petition taken from the middle of a prayer; but although it is a part of a larger whole, it is complete in itself, and may without danger or detriment be isolated from the context with a view to more minute inspection and more specific practical use.

I count it of first-rate importance to state distinctly here at the outset, that the prayer in general, as well as this clause in particular, points to those who are already Christians. It speaks not of birth, but of growth. We have to do here not with the raising of the dead, but with the advance of the living. You will fatally miss the apostle's meaning if you confound the conversion of sinners with the obedience of the renewed. A man has broken a branch from a tree, and stuck it into the ground. As he contemplates his childish handiwork, he overhears a skilful horticulturist instructing his pupils in

the art of increasing the growth and fruitfulness of trees, —they must be pruned, trained, watered, manured; forthwith the simpleton begins to perform toilsomely all these operations upon his branch, expecting that thereby he will make it fruitful. It never grows fruitful: it withers first, and then rots away. Behold the picture of one who has never passed from death into life under the mighty ministry of the Spirit, and yet strives diligently to adorn his life with a seemly obedience to the law of God. In giving lessons on religion, we must, like our Master with his pupil Nicodemus, begin at the beginning: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The child, whether of the natural or the spiritual family, must live before he grow. The tree, whether in our garden or in God's, must have a living root beneath the ground ere it can wave fruitful branches in the sky.

This portion of the Word bears on the converted, stimulating them to an increase of spiritual understanding and practical holiness. Assuming that the new life has begun, it proposes to carry that life forward into more vigorous and beneficent exercise. Other texts tell how the dead may live, this text tells how the living may more effectually serve the Lord. Incidentally, indeed, and as a secondary result, the exhibition of a believer's privilege and duty may pierce the conscience of a prodigal, and induce him to arise and go to the Father too; but here and now the word is directly addressed to those who are already accepted in the Beloved. The Lord has given

this word expressly with the view of administering instruction and reproof to his own children.

The verse springs at first and grows to half its height as a single stem; it then parts into two equal and parallel branches. To "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," thus far the Christian life is represented as one and indivisible: a walk worthy of the Lord includes within its ample girth all the graces of the Spirit. But at a certain height this solid mass of stem divides and diverges, thenceforth rising toward heaven in two separate yet twin-like boughs, corresponding to the two pillars on which the whole structure of Christian theology stands—*faith* and *obedience*. From the Decalogue downwards, the teaching of the Scriptures has been poured alternately and impartially into these two moulds. To know the *true*, and to do the *right*, is the whole duty of man. God is in Christ revealed: we should draw near and know him. The world sins and suffers: we should strive to do it good. These are the twin exercises of a believer's life,—to know more every day of God his Saviour, and to do good every day to a needy world; increase in the knowledge of God, and be fruitful in every good work.

Passing over for the present that more generalized view of the Christian life which represents all in one, as a "walk worthy of the Lord," I request your attention to that view of it which appears in the latter portion of the text, composed of two distinct yet united branches,—"fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

We must examine first the nature of each, and thereafter we shall be better able to perceive and appreciate their reciprocal relations.

I. *The nature of each.*

1. *Active obedience:* "Fruitful in every good work."

(1.) "*Work.*"—The Christian life is essentially a life of labour. They who find Christ do, indeed, often speak of having found rest to their souls; but that rest does not imply exemption from work: on the contrary, this "peace in believing" only supplies a firm foot-hold whereon the labourer may stand more steadily, and so labour with more effect. The rest which a troubled soul finds in Christ is like the rest which the Pilgrim Fathers found on the American continent. When they stepped upon the shore free, feeling God's earth firm under their feet, and seeing God's sunlight bright above their heads, they said and sung, "This is our rest." But they meant not idleness. Each family reared a cabin in the bush, and forthwith waged war against the desert, until they had subdued it, and turned it into a fruitful field. Their resting-place was their working-place; and none the worse in their esteem was the rest because of the labour that accompanied it. Beyond the reach of the tyrant, and past the dangers of the sea, the rest they sought and found was a place to work on, and useful labour close at hand.

Such is a Christian's rest when the Son has made him free, as long as he remains in the body. Liberty to

labour is all the rest he obtains or desires. Trusting in Christ's merits, he also walks in Christ's steps: he goeth about doing good.

(2.) "*Good* work."—Not energy of action merely: the work must be good. The master is God; the motive, love; the immediate aim, the good of the world; and the standard of measurement, "the law and the testimony."

(3.) "*Every* good work."—True Christian beneficence is characterized by a grand and god-like universality. This does not mean that one man should go round the world and meddle with everything in it: it rather means that he should neglect no opportunity that comes in his way. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" but do not waste time and effort in trying to do all at once. The rule is not to overtake all, but to refuse none that overtake you. Have you seen those large, lovely, transparent globes that float in sheltered bays a little beneath the surface of the sea? They are living creatures. They cannot cut quickly through the water in chase of prey, but they lie wondrously open and watchful to seize the prey that comes within their reach. They lie open on all sides, and stretch out arms on all sides; and though they cannot go to a distance for what they need, they intercept and use whatever, in the miscellaneous movements of the waves, may be passing by. Thus, though nearly stationary, they are abundantly fed. Such is the activity of a Christian man. His meat is to do the Father's will; but he is almost fixed to the spot,

and cannot roam over the world for his spirit's congenial food. He feeds abundantly notwithstanding. Let him only lie open, and spread out, and be ready with an active arm and an eager appetite: the sort of food that will please his taste and strengthen his soul is floating past continually in the tide of time. No Christian is ever idle for want of something to do. But it is of the last importance that we should cultivate a universal willingness. Bought servants must not choose their tasks: they must labour at the task which their Master assigns to them. The tendency of every one of us is to do duty by halves. One is great in gentleness, and fails in courage; another is great in courage, and fails in gentleness. Brethren, it is not this one, or that other work for which you have a natural aptitude, but "*every* good work." The acting of a virtue that is not in your nature will be a more impressive evidence that grace is reigning. When an elephant picks a pin from the dust with his huge trunk, men wonder more than when they see him break a tree. So when a man of might—some intellectual and moral hero, who dares every danger, and delights in having danger to dare—condescends to bear with the infirmities of the weakest, and like the good shepherd, tenderly lifts a weary lamb in his arms, the testimony of the fact is resistless, and observers confess that the grace of God is there. To the same extent, on the opposite side, the display of martyr courage in a good cause by one who is constitutionally sensitive and timid, tells more effectually than the exercise of the

natural bent. When the plaintive and bashful Jeremiah, who said he could not speak because he was a child, stands forth for God and righteousness, setting his face like a flint before all his enemies, and denouncing unjust tyrants to their face, the rebuke is powerful in exact proportion to the natural feebleness of the reprover.

"Every good work," Christian. You must not pick and choose. Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it; for God has put it in your way. Direct effort to convince a sinner and lead him to Christ is one good work; to set an untrained young mother on the way of cleaning her house and cooking her husband's food is another. "Every good work." Here it may be to open a church, and there to dig a well; here to support a missionary, and there to widen a street. Everything that would benefit the world, God's creation, or man, God's child, is congenial occupation for the disciple of Jesus. Universality is the characteristic most needed in our Christian benevolence. Without partiality and without hypocrisy was the Master; without partiality and without hypocrisy should the servant be.

(4.) "*Fruitful in every good work.*"—The comparison of Christian beneficence to fruit indicates its spontaneous nature, its useful effect, and its great abundance. The good works grow as fruit grows on a fruit-tree. The tree has first been made good, and then the fruit grows and ripens spontaneously. You cannot gather grapes of thorns; but neither can you find thorn fruit growing on a true vine. Every creature after its kind. He who in

the regeneration has been made partaker of Christ, gives forth in his life Christ-like actions. There is a good deal of artificial charity agoing. People can tie oranges to the sprigs of a fir-tree in a parlour, and the show will gratify children on a winter evening. But true Christian beneficence is a fruit that grows, and is not tied on. It swells up from sap which the tree of righteousness draws out of that infinite love in which it is rooted. He who is in Christ cannot stand still, any more than the water in those iron tubes which traverse our streets in connection with the great reservoir: on it must flow, wherever there is an opening, by reason of the pressure from above. Hear the exclamation of that ancient Christian in explanation of his wonderful self-sacrifice and energetic labour for the good of men: "The love of Christ constraineth me." Efforts burst impetuous from his bosom whenever an opening was made, because he was in union with the Fountain-head on high.

As fruit is sweet and profitable, so are the efforts of Christians for the good of the world. And like the abundance with which good trees bear, is the abundance of a true disciple's labours. The fecundity of Nature is a standing wonder with all who possess sufficient intelligence to observe it. The faculty of production in the vegetable creation is, beyond all calculation or expression, great. Through adverse seasons and other causes, the actual quantity of fruit brought to perfection is greatly limited; but the tendency and willingness and capability of plants to produce their fruit in inconceiv-

able quantities may be seen everywhere in the teeming, flowering spring. Such is the tendency of a renewed heart. Few, few of his aspirations does a Christian ever actually reach; but they swell in his bosom numerous as the embryo seeds that hide beneath the flowers of spring. He who numbers the hairs of our head knows and feels every loving thought that trembles in a broken heart. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. He recognizes the breathings of his own Spirit in the desires; and he will remove in good time these trees of righteousness from the wilderness here to another garden, where all their flowers will become fruits, and all their fruits will ripen fully under the light of love.

2. *Increase in the knowledge of God.*—Christ came to make known the Father. All our true knowledge of God comes through the Mediator. The old invitation still holds good, "O taste and see that God is good!" The prodigal would sometimes, in his exile, think of his father, and fear his anger; but he never knew his father until he returned and lay in his bosom. In obtaining pardon and reconciliation through the blood of the Lamb, you have the beginning of this knowledge; and those who attain the beginning are never content to rest there. They forget and leave behind the attainments already made, and reach forward to other and higher measures of experience.

I am persuaded that any Christian, be he learned or unlearned, who has been walking by faith for ten or twenty years, will be able, on a careful comparison, to

detect a marked difference between the knowledge of God which he attained at first, and that which he possesses now. As long as the tree lives, it grows. The disciple who has walked far over the pilgrim's journey, has a broader, deeper, more comprehensive knowledge both of himself and of God than on the day when he first took up his cross to follow Christ.

Among other features of the divine nature and attributes which the experienced disciple knows better now, the Fatherliness of God may be noted as perhaps the side on which the greatest advances are obtained. More or less of the spirit of bondage remains in a young disciple even after true conversion. It is long ere perfect love casts out fear; perhaps the fear is never wholly cast out on this side of the grave; but much progress may be made in gradually diminishing it, by the inlet of confiding love. It is like the process of exhausting the air from a glass cup, and so making it adhere more and more firmly to the table on which it stands. You place it with its open mouth in contact with a substantially solid but superficially soft surface, and begin to exhaust the air from its cavity. At the very commencement of the operation, when only a very little of the air has been extracted, the cup begins to clasp spontaneously the surface on which it leans. You proceed; firmer and more firm becomes the cup's hold, as the process of exhaustion goes forward. You do not, indeed, succeed in drawing out all the air,—some remains in spite of every effort; but, for practical purposes, it is all the same in

effect as if the vacuum were complete. In some such way increases the knowledge of God in a pardoned sinner's breast. More and more of guilt's fear is drawn off from his bosom; more and more firmly, therefore, does that bosom cleave to the almighty strength it leans upon. The fear is never wholly removed in the body here; and yet, as to cleaving, the result may be the same practically. So much of the fear may be taken out, and so great, consequently, may be love's spontaneous clasping to a Saviour's arm, that all the principalities and powers of earth, all things present and all things to come, could not separate that trusting man from that trusted Redeemer.

II. *The union and reciprocal relations of these two: Fruitfulness in Christian activity, and Increase in the knowledge of God.*

The two grow together not only as two parallel boughs of one bifurcated tree, standing on one stem, drawing sap from the same root, and pointing up to the same heaven. The union is all this, and more. On the tree, one of the boughs might live although the other were wrenched off by a storm. But the union of the two things in the text is like the union of the two sides in a human body: if one were wanting, the other would die. Christ-like work for the world will lead the labourer's understanding deeper and deeper into the secret of the Lord; and, reciprocally, increase in the knowledge of God stimulates into greater

activity substantial kindness to men. As the swing of the pendulum to the right becomes the power which carries it to the left, and its swing to the left the power which carries it back to the right; so true good-doing makes the doer know God more, and true knowledge of God sends back the scholar with a new impulse to his work in the world. Moreover, by the balancing alternations of the pendulum aberrations are prevented, and the steady, true-going of the clock is secured; so the Christian life goes best which goes between a deep, contemplative, spiritual knowledge of God, and hearty practical work, as far as opportunity offers, for every interest of every brother man. These two God hath joined; let no man dare to put them asunder.

1. Contemplate now the two sides alternately, one at a time: and, first, active obedience is necessary to a solid increase of spiritual experience; you must be fruitful in every good work, if you would increase in the knowledge of God.

Alas! the history of Christianity teems with evidence that spiritual contemplation soon runs to seed when practical duty is neglected. It was thus that monkery began. It sprang at an early period of the Christian era, and in Egypt—an ill-omened land. Men desired to increase in the knowledge of God, and therefore retired from the world. They hid themselves in caves on the edges of the desert: good works they rendered for themselves impossible, by a voluntary banishment from their kind. They made themselves utterly barren in that

very thing wherein God had commanded them to be fruitful, and that on pretence of obtaining thereby more experimental knowledge of God. What God had joined those men presumed to put asunder; and they fared accordingly, as all potsherds of the earth shall fare who strive against their Maker. Simon, on the top of his pillar, with the world wondering after him as a saint, did not know God so well as he might if he had kept a shop all day, and played with his children in the evening. The whole monkish system is a divorce of these two, who by God's appointment were joined in a perpetual marriage. Begun in sincere ignorance, it has been perpetuated by a cunning policy; and the result is a brood of creatures fit neither for this world nor the next. Their kite was pointing heavenward and rising; but it was not rising far enough nor fast enough. It seemed to be struggling upward, but held in check by the string that attached it to the ground. That line which bound it to the earth seemed the only hindrance of its flight to heaven. Like foolish children, they cut the line that bound it to the earth, expecting to see it then rising unimpeded to the sky; but, lo! the kite when so set free, instead of ascending majestically to heaven, whirled round two or three times wildly, giddily, and then fell flat upon the ground. Such was the result of Rome's effort to raise her votaries to heaven, by cutting their connection with the earth. The so-called saints fell lower than before.

It is in active life that a Christian may make greatest

progress in the knowledge of God. If you have been reconciled to God through Christ, the best method of improving a begun acquaintance is to take work in his service. If any man is willing to do the work, he shall know the doctrine. The more you work, the more you will be wearied; and the more you are wearied, the stronger will grow your appetite for rest: this will make you lean the oftener on the Father's breast, and consequently increase your acquaintance with the Father. He who gives out most in exhausting labour, takes in most through wholesome food. As a general rule, the hardest worker enjoys the robustest life: spiritually, this rule certainly holds good. He who, at Christ's command, puts forth much energy in doing good, draws more of sustaining grace from the Redeemer's fulness to replace the outlay, and so knows better by experience how precious is God's unspeakable gift.

2. On the other hand, contemplative communion with God is necessary to a solid, successful activity in social life. You must learn day by day more of God's goodness in Christ to you, if you would sustain without weariness the labours of the Christian calling.

Here is one of the laws under which the disciples of Jesus live: If they rush into a constant round of working, without a corresponding increase in prayer, the work will wane away like the flame of a lamp when the oil is exhausted. When our work increases in bulk, we need more of experimental communion with God to animate the extended body. He who works most would also

need to pray most. Hard task this, do you think? Yes, if it be a task, it is a hard one; but if work and prayer be both alike a privilege, the more you have of both the happier will you be.

There is a well in your garden, and a pump for raising the water to the surface. In this way you obtain for ordinary seasons a sufficient supply. But at length a drought, more severe and more lengthened than any heretofore, compels you to make a greater demand upon the well. Every day you ply the handle harder and longer, to refresh the ground and preserve the life of the languishing vegetation. At last the supply fails, and you ply your task in vain. No water comes, because there has been too much working; the work degenerates into a barren, empty, hoarse noise. What then? What shall be done? Sink your well deeper, and it will stand a greater strain. We must go and do likewise when, by too great and too long-continued external activity, our movement becomes empty and fruitless labour. When we work till our souls are wrought out, we must go deeper down into the hidden veins of the soul's supply—go deeper into the love of God, by secret communion with the Saviour; and the increase of his favour consciously compassing your soul, will sustain a new and greater effort of Christian activity.

Recall, in the close, the chief lesson of the text, as it is addressed to the disciples of Christ. The prayerless cannot work well, and the idle do not pray much. The

law is—Both or neither. On the one hand, do not permit your desire for spiritual communion with God to withdraw you from any kind or measure of work which a fellow-creature needs; and on the other, do not permit your constant immersion in active duty to restrain or curtail your communion with God. Go into every good work in company with every true worker; and hallow all by keeping company with Christ at every stage of the process. Get, through the Mediator, free and frequent approach to the Father of your spirit; and commend your faith to the world, by a ready, hearty co-operation, in every effort that promises to advance either the temporal or the spiritual interests of your fellow-men. *Do*, *do* whatever your hand finds to do. Christ your master continually went about *doing* good: if you would be like him now, and see him as he is at last, *be fruitful in every good work.*

Between these two—doing good to a needy world, and getting new measures of grace out of the Redeemer's fulness—between these two let a Christian's life vibrate, until life on earth shall beat its last, and at its last beat leap into the life eternal.

XXII.

"Where are the Nine?"

"*Where are the nine?*"—LUKE xvii. 17.

HERE is a house, a palace, the palace of the Great King; and there is a window in it—a window of transparent glass. You are looking towards it, but you see nothing. Many rich and glorious things are within, but you see none of them. All that you behold is a sheen of sunlight glittering on the glass. You see the window, and you see it bright; but you do not see through the window into the dwelling—you do not see through the window the Indweller.

Come nearer: look long and steadily. Shade the glare of the outer sunlight from your eyes, and continue looking. The precious things that lie within will begin one by one to appear, until at last, seeing no longer the window, through the window you see treasured up within all the jewels of the kingdom,—see within the King himself looking in love on you. That window is the Word. Many people see it, and recognize a certain purity and brilliancy in its teaching; but they do not see through

it; do not through it look unto Jesus, whom it contains and reveals. Ye "search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." Ye look towards the window, and when the western sun is beating on it, you behold a shining golden glory, and you think you have used the window well, and obtained the benefit it was intended to confer. Ye "search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: but they are they which testify of me, and ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Not those who look to the Scriptures and own them sacred, but those who through the Scriptures seek and find Christ, shall have life. Here is a window in heaven at which the Saviour shows himself. Come near; look steadily. Shade off from the mental vision the disturbing glare of the world's busy day, and to them that look for him he will appear,—appear altogether lovely.

"Where are the nine?" It is the turning-point of a tender story. Ten leprous men applied for help to Jesus of Nazareth. He directed them how to obtain a cure. They did as he bade them, and were all restored to health. Of the ten, one returned to thank his Benefactor, while all the rest went off, enjoying the gift but forgetting the Giver. To the one grateful patient who returned, the Physician put the question, "Where are the nine?" He received no answer to his question, and immediately thereafter the scene closed. We learn nothing more of the course or the fate of these nine healed lepers. Tender, touching story; and this question constitutes its

turning-point. Touching story; we have heard it now. Let us pass on to the next.

No, friend; we have not yet got all that lies within that story. We have seen as yet only the window, with a certain pleasant thrilling sheen dancing on its surface. We have seen the glass darkly beautiful itself; but we have not seen, through the glass, the face, the form, the heart of Jesus.

Fix your regard on the spot a while. Draw near: look steadily in. Adjust your mind and affections: shake them out of the frame which they have taken from the burning cares of the world's week. Let the walls of this house, and the solemnities of the Sabbath, and the sounds of praise, and the company of worshippers, constitute a veil wherewith the mere disturbing rays may be kept at bay. Look thus, and in secret pray for the Spirit, whose mission it is to reveal Christ to men.

He is near. He has come from heaven and taken his stand behind this transparent glass. He is wistfully looking after the giddy multitudes who are shooting past like a rushing stream, seeing not his loving look, hearing not his pitying cry. He is near to-day: he is within this veil. Through that transparency, if we adjust our eyes and shade off the outside glare, we may see into his heart, and mark there the throbbing of a love that passeth knowledge. Out with the world's blinding light, and gaze not idly on the shining surface of the Bible, but through it on the Beloved who shows himself at the lattice there.

Through this brief text I believe we may perceive much of the mind that is in Christ Jesus towards sinful men.

As the Lord was about to enter a certain village on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem, ten lepers met him, and besought him to cure their disease. Their case was sad. They were incurables. They were shunned by their neighbours. They saw their own flesh wasting away by inches, and could look for no deliverance except in the grave. What none other could do for them Jesus did. He acceded to their request, and healed them all. This act was of a piece with his whole life. He went about doing good. His hand was always stretched out to save, never lifted up to smite. His whole history teems with tenderness. He was a man, and nothing human lay out of his way. He had sympathy for every sorrow, balm for every wound. No human being did this man Christ Jesus ever hurt. When in the overflowings of his love he needed an example of stern judgment to enforce his warnings, he chose a tree as the object of the curse. He would not permit the curse to fall on men. Even fruitless human lives he spared. To show the righteous judgments of God, he smote a barren fig-tree; but he left barren souls unsmitten, that they might get in full their day of grace,—that they might turn and live.

This Physician, however, looked to the whole man, while his patients for the most part looked only to the lower half. They suffered: they felt the suffering, but not the sin. They were eager to get healing for their

bodies ; and if they could gain this object, were willing to go away with the sting of the second death still in their souls. The blind men at Jericho cried vehemently, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on us." When the people rebuked them, and enjoined them to hold their peace, they cried so much the more,—as a stream of water rushes more impetuously down when efforts are made to obstruct its course. Thus men in need cry for a cure when there is sensation in the seat of the ailment. In the same way these lepers entered with their whole heart into the business of applying for a cure.

But while the patients generally thought of the bodily ailment only, the Physician looked to both the disease of the body and the sin of the soul,—the sin of the soul mainly. To heal this disease was the end of the Lord. Other healings he made the instruments, the stepping-stones whereby he might reach his goal. He was always passing through time's affairs towards the interests of eternity. Those with whom he dealt continually vexed him by attempting to detain him among the stuff of the present: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.....Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 40–42).

Let us look now, in the light of these examples, to the spirit and conduct of the lepers. They were all weary of the loathsome disease, and all desired to be healed.

As Jesus passed by, having previously heard of his compassion and his power, they united in a fervent appeal for help: "Jesus, master, have mercy on us."

He healed them, in compliance with their request; but he sent them out of his sight to be healed. He tries them: he desired that they should return to himself with thanks; but the Lord loveth a cheerful comer as well as a cheerful giver. He does not, in this department, accept of forced or formal offerings. By arranging that the cure takes effect while they are at a distance, he tests effectually whether a true, grateful love, is burning in their breasts. If they desired only the bodily boon, they will go away with the healing and forget the Healer.

Nine of the lepers, on discovering that their leprosy had left them, went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. They were glad, no doubt, when they felt their flesh coming again like the flesh of a little child;—they were glad, but not grateful. The spirit of these men, like the spirit of the beast, goeth downward. They rejoice in their whole skin, as the ox rejoices in green pastures; but as to recognition of the Giver, they are as dull as he.

One of the healed men came back to praise the Lord; and he was a Samaritan. Incidentally we obtain a glimpse here of the hardness that had befallen Israel, as well as of the tenderness with which the Good Shepherd sought to restore his own. He receives with open arms the stranger; but he laments that the lost sheep of the

house of Israel did not return too to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

In the act of calling some of the twelve from their employment on the Lake of Galilee, the Lord had said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." He made them what he already was himself. His command, "Follow me," went deeper than the act of walking behind him on the same path: he invited them to do what he was doing—to be his colleagues and successors in the ministry of the gospel, in the work of the kingdom. In general, he came to seek and save the lost; and in one particular aspect of his saving work, he was a fisher of men.

When he cast his line into the world's great sea, to win souls from it to himself, he put on it a bait that was pleasant to nature. Healing for the body was the enticement which he employed. Many a poor diseased creature, drawn to him as the curer of disease, was caught, and won, and renewed. The woman who was bowed down with her infirmity, and impoverished by unsuccessful efforts to obtain a cure, was in this way brought to Jesus. For help to her body she came; and having come to the Saviour, she found life for her soul. Her long agony had worn her shame away and given her boldness: she pressed through the crowd, and touched the hem of the Physician's garment. She seems to have been much amazed at the result. The healed was filled with wonder, and the Healer with delight. I scarcely know any occasion in the gospel history in

which the Lord manifested an intenser pleasure, than when that poor woman drew from him both the healings at once. I think I see him standing still, and turning round, weary of the plaudits of a sycophant multitude, and seeking out this one suffering sinner who came to him that she might have life. Remember, in such a case, the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He gave her pardon and eternal life,—and to give was his own delight.

But the nine! How wistfully Jesus looks after them as they go away! As a fisher, who has cast his line into the sea, is peculiarly disappointed when the fishes approach and carry off the bait without being taken,—so he looked on the healed lepers as they receded from his view. They had greedily swallowed what was sweet to nature,—the cure of their bodily disease; but having obtained the boon they sought, they did not permit themselves to be pierced, and held, and brought back by that which lay behind and within the bait,—the pardoning love and renewing power of the Saviour. Ah, lepers, lepers, if you had known in that day the things that belonged to your peace! You have got quit of the leprosy; but you have not escaped the grave and the judgment-seat. You have put off the leprous skin; but you have not put off the old man. You took greedily the temporal benefit, and despised the precious gift which the Lord was longing to bestow. You made a deep mistake in snatching merely the lesser gift, and leaving the greater behind.

We are not left to conjecture what the Lord would have said to the nine, if they had come back to him with tender, thankful hearts. We know what he said to the one who did return: "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." The expression which has been translated, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," is simply, "Thy faith hath saved thee."

The expression occurs (ch. vii. 50) in a case where no bodily disease intervenes, and where, consequently, the meaning is not complicated by the occurrence of a bodily cure. The woman who washed his feet with tears in Simon's house laboured under no bodily ailment. Jesus did not in that case perform a cure. He found the body sound, and healed the sin-diseased soul. He said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The phrase in the original is precisely the same as in the case of the leper; but as there was no physical cure to which it could be referred, the translators have rendered it literally, "Thy faith hath *saved* thee."

Now, it cannot be meant here that his faith had healed his leprosy. His leprosy was healed before that particular exhibition of faith which consisted in returning to Jesus. Moreover, the nine were healed as well as this one; and manifestly the Lord intends to intimate that the Samaritan had faith, in contradistinction to the nine who lacked it. The faith, whatever its nature may have been, was peculiar to the one of the ten; but all the ten alike were healed of their leprosy; therefore it cannot be the healing of his leprosy that his peculiar faith obtained.

He had another faith, and obtained another cure. He believed to the saving of his soul.

In this man the Redeemer sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied: in the other men he sees no fruit, and therefore complains. The plaint is tender and human, and brings Christ's compassion very close to us. It is as if he saw the prospect of winning ten, to add to his crown of joy and rejoicing; and missing all but one, he looked after the nine with tears as they went away. In the light of his whole life and ministry you may easily read that the reason why he lamented the absence of the nine was, that their return with thanks would have shown them to be tenderly receptive, and have afforded him the opportunity of bestowing pardon and peace. It was with an eye to an opening into their souls that he had healed their bodies. With liberal hand he had poured out on them the goodness of God, that it might lead them to repentance; he was disappointed, accordingly, when these nine needy men left untouched the treasures of his grace.

Such was the heart of Jesus then; and such also it is to-day. Such was his longing to save the needy then; and such is his longing to save still.

His methods, too, are similar. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He employs the powers of Nature and the facts of Providence to further his spiritual kingdom of holiness and love. In particular, it is the Lord's way, alternately or simultaneously to administer two different, opposite applications, with one and the same

end in view,—to lead sinners to himself for the saving of their souls: these are the goodness and the severity of God. Mercy and judgment alternate in the dispensations of God, and in the songs of his people. (Ps. ci. 1.)

When the Lord relieves a pain, or confers a bounty, he expects that the delivered man will come back to him with praise. We need here a living faith in the Ruler of the world. We miss many specimens of his kindness, through a careless habit of mind. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." He restores you to health after sickness; or he maintains you in health unbroken for many years. He blesses your business, so that from comparative poverty you come to plenty. He surrounds you with a loving circle, supplies a nursing for you in sickness, which the wealth of a kingdom could not buy. He casts your lot in a pleasant place, where civil and religious liberty is over all, like the air over the earth. He is pouring out his goodness; but remember, he rules with intelligence, and for a purpose. You may see clearly in our text that Jesus healed the lepers in order that his goodness might draw them back tender and receptive to himself. He changeth not: for the same object he lavishes his kindness on you. Oh, if we could hear the word from high heaven—the word would still be, "Where are the nine?"

This grateful spirit, like other spirits, needs to be embodied in order that it may be of substantial use. It should clothe itself in thank-offerings. There are many

gifts coming down from the "Father of lights:" there ought to be many thank-offerings contributed to his service. Plentiful showers are dropping from the skies: many springs should be bursting from the earth. Good works that we have in hand—works really needful and wisely planned—should not be starved for want of means to carry them on. "Freely ye have received, freely give."

XXIII.

"In this thy Day."

"*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*"
LUKE xix. 41.

IMMEDIATELY before his passion, the Lord had retired for a time with his disciples beyond Jordan. But as the period of his appointed baptism approached, he was straitened and stirred by his desire to finish the work. He arose and set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem. On the way he taught precious lessons, and performed merciful cures, but he tarried nowhere long. His heart was full of his great purpose, as the moment approached for its fulfilment. He took the twelve aside by the way, and told them plainly of his approaching death. But the message was so great, that, though spoken in the clearest terms, they lacked capacity to take it in. They understood him not. As they passed Jericho, the two blind beggars were healed; and Zaccheus, the chief publican, was visited and won.

On the way between Jericho and the eastern slope of

Olivet, the Master taught his little class yet another feature of the kingdom under the figure of the ten pounds intrusted to the ten servants. The nobleman left his home to obtain from the supreme power of the world the sovereignty of his native country. When he returned with kingly power, he rewarded the loyal and punished the faithless. Shadowing forth his own return in power, the Lord in the person of that earthly potentate said, "But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

"*And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.*"—After predicting his second coming in glory to judge the world, he hastened onward to Jerusalem, that he might be judged, condemned, and crucified by wicked men. What union of honour and shame, of power and weakness, of mortality as man and life eternal as God over all!

"*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*"—On the same spot David stood and looked down on Jerusalem, and wept (2 Sam. xv. 30). David was a type of Christ. His weeping was in many aspects the opposite of Christ's, as a type is the reverse of its lesson. David was ascending the hill; Jesus was descending. David was hastening out of Jerusalem to save his life; Jesus was hastening into Jerusalem in order to lay his life down. David wept for himself, because he had lost a crown he once wore; Jesus wept for others, because they refused a crown and kingdom in their offer.

Mark then the fact, for it is significant, that the ground which drank in the falling tears from David's cheeks on the day of his dethronement, was wet with tears from the eyes of David's Lord on the day when he had been accepted King of Israel by the acclaim of assembled thousands.

After his great humiliation, David's tears were dried, and he returned to Jerusalem triumphant—returned, like the nobleman in the parable, to reward those who had been faithful to his government; and to render a reward also to those men who had said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." In like manner, the Messiah, after these tears, and the crown of thorns and the cross, will return to reign and to judge.

The Messiah was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His life was one long suffering; but in it there are two marks—two monuments set up to designate the places where he wept. Two Bochim pillars stand on the edge of his path over this life. Both the spots were on the Mount of Olives: one on the western slope and one on the eastern; one in sight of Jerusalem, and the other at Bethany, with the mountain-ridge between. A strange history has that hill: the earth on either side of its base was wet with the Redeemer's tears; while the olive-yard of Gethsemane was the scene of his bloody sweat.

These two recorded weepings of the Lord Jesus were a balanced pair in their moral meaning, as well as in their physical position. The one was a melting in sym-

pathy with human suffering; the other an agony on account of human sin. He wept at Bethany because his friends suffered; he wept at Olivet because his adversaries were rioting in the pleasures of sin.

The two weepings are recorded by two completely distinct words. The term employed to express the weeping at Bethany indicates tears only. It was a silent flood. The term in this text means a crying; that physical effect of human sorrow when it reaches its highest point—a combination of flowing tears and strong cries. It is not often that a man of mature age, if he enjoys mental and physical health, is seen shedding tears; but it is still more seldom that a man of mature age bursts out into that peculiar agony which rends his frame with audible sobs. This seems to have been the kind of grief into which the Redeemer had fallen on that spring evening on the edge of Olivet which looked towards the setting sun.

The difference between the two weepings seems to be like the difference between a soft spring shower, and the rain that strikes the earth in heavy, quick drops, when the clouds are riven with lightning, and the mountains are echoing with the thunder's roar. How different the moral meaning of these two rainings on the earth. For the suffering of the two saved sisters, Jesus wept the soft, tender, silent tears of sympathizing love: over the crowd of self-pleasers, Christ-crucifiers, that filled Jerusalem when Jerusalem was filling up the measure of her sins, Jesus wept those hot, burning drops, which are

shaken fitfully from a human face, when the mourner's whole frame is rending, and convulsive cries are breaking unbidden from his lips.

David had two weepings as well as Jesus. Not that the king of Israel wept only twice in his life, or during his reign; for we know that sometimes he made his bed to swim with his tears: but in his history two examples stand out on record, like monumental pillars, near the path on which he trod. One of these, as we have already seen, was on the western slope of Olivet, at the spot where Jesus long afterwards wept; the other was far eastward of that mountain, when his rebellious but well-beloved son was dead. In that sorrow David stands in clear contrast to his Lord. He wept in weakness, because he could not save his son's life by laying down his own.

That weakness does not adhere to our King. The Heir of David's throne sheds no such feeble tears. He is mighty to save. He gloriously accomplished what David fondly and despairingly wished he had been able to do. When he wept over Jerusalem, he did not weep in weakness, as one that could not save: he wept in tenderness, as knowing that the perishing would not accept salvation at his hands. In bringing many sons unto glory, the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. By dying, he destroyed death, and him who had its power. He did the very thing which his type lamented his inability to do: he gave his life a ransom for many. "He bare our sins in his own

body on the tree:" "He died, the just for the unjust;" he died that we might live.

The lamentation of David was on this wise: Alas! I cannot give my life to atone for and recall my prodigal son; and though I gave my life, it would not avail. The lamentation of the Son of God is, that the prodigal, when atonement is made, and righteousness wrought, and pardon won, shuts his eyes against the light, and will not accept the salvation that is pressed to his heart.

What David the father could not do, in that he was weak through the flesh—mere humanity—Jesus Christ the Son did, by his own power and goodness, as God over all. Our help is laid on one that is mighty.

We have had fathers of our flesh who loved us, who would have given their own life for ours, who wept when they could not ward off the blow from our head by laying their own beneath it. Oh, if we had known no other help! They could not save: they must stand and see us sink. But our help is on One that is mighty. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Why he wept: "*Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*"—It is interesting and instructive to notice here, how the Lord regards men both in their corporate and their individual capacities. He made us, and he knows what is in man. He knows that each immortal stands on his own feet, and must meet with God alone, as far as regards all the rest of humanity. But he knows and

recognizes, also, that we are made with social instincts and faculties; that we cannot exercise the functions of our nature without society; and that we are all affected deeply by our intercourse with others, both as regards our time and our eternity. He who at one time exclaims, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" or, "O Chorazin!" "O Bethsaida!" at another time brings the sword of the Spirit to the very breast of an individual man, and singling him out from all the world, runs it through his joints and marrow. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Each in turn; each in its own place. Now the community is addressed, and now the person. In one aspect, each man stands or falls for himself alone; in another aspect, we grasp each other, and like the victims of a shipwreck, either help to sink or help to save one another.

It is in the latter aspect that the Lord regarded the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as he looked on them across the glen from the neighbouring mountain's brow. They were brethren in iniquity. Hand was joining in hand in preparation for the highest crime ever done in the universe. They were leagued in a dark covenant to crucify the Son of God. Priest was stirring up people; people were preparing to support priest. Native population was preparing to coerce foreign ruler; foreign ruler to falter and give way to the coercion of a mob. They were linked together as one man: "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords:" "We will not have this man to reign over us:" "This

is the heir; come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

Looking down on Jerusalem, and making great lamentation over it, I find the ground of his grief was, not that they had sinned, and so brought on themselves condemnation. In that there was nothing peculiar to Jerusalem. Here they were in the same state as all the world. For that, though the loss was great, a remedy was ready. This Redeemer, travelling in the greatness of his strength, would not weep because men needed redemption. What makes him weep is, that they will not accept it at his hands. There was a weeping for the Fall; but it is past. There was a weeping in heaven when sin began; but the covenant dried up those tears. The Son interposed: "Save from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." The atonement is sufficient for a world. There needs no weeping now over the fall. One woe is past; but, lo! another cometh. The lost will not accept the Saviour; and again he weeps. It is not, Oh, if thou hadst never fallen! but, If thou hadst known the redemption that I bring.

This, under the covenant of grace, is the turning-point with us all. There is condemnation over all the world, as long as the world meets God on its own work; but "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

"*In this thy day.*"—Jerusalem had a day. Every community and every person has a day—a day of mercy. If in that day the lost shall turn, they will get life in the

Lord. But if they allow their day to pass, there remaineth only darkness—a fearful looking for of judgment.

"*The things which belong unto thy peace.*"—The things which God had fixed in the eternal covenant, and revealed in the fulness of time, were things that Jerusalem did not know. Like the way-side, hard-trodden ground, they did not open their hearts to take in the seed of the word. If the things had been harsh and forbidding, we might have understood their distaste; but the things concerned their own peace. Peace through pardon; peace from God; peace with God. Strange, that men should turn away from that winsome sight!

Merchants know the state of the markets, capitalists know how it goes with shares,—the things which belong to their gains; but how many know not the things that belong to their peace!

"*But they are hid from thine eyes.*"—"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." "*Hid.*" The tender mercies of God held out in free offer, and pressed, how come they to be hid? *Hid*, as sometimes the sky and the sun are hid by thick exhalations that rise from the gross earth. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." This cloud comes up and covers the great things of God—blots out from the blinded transgressor the lights set high in heaven, to illuminate a darkened world and lead to a happy home.

Instead of carrying further the exposition of the text

in its original application, I shall now endeavour to apply its lesson to our own time and place. It was meant to be so transferred. The word of the Lord remains for us after the holy men who wrote it have gone to their rest. This word "liveth and abideth for ever."

We have here a city, and it is a city of many solemnities. This is our Jerusalem. Many precious things are embalmed, like bits of amber, in its somewhat hard and rugged history. Especially, here the Reformation had its dwelling in its youth. Here its ministers faithfully preached, and its martyrs meekly fell. Edinburgh is one of the sacred places for the Protestants of Scotland, and of the world. It is a city that has been lifted up to heaven by its privileges: if it fall by its sins, it will be more crushed than other sinful cities, because it falls from a greater height. Even in our own days the Lord hath done great things for us here, whereof we are glad.

If the same Jesus should stand on the hill that overlooks our city from the east and look on its busy multitudes, what might his emotions be? He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" and if we be like the Jerusalem he then gazed upon, he would weep. In the conflict of emotions which would rise in the breast of the Son of man, would the "Father, I thank thee," or, "Oh! if thou hadst known!" be the prevailing exclamation?

Those eyes that were blinded with tears, are the same that John saw as a flame of fire. Those eyes are over all the earth, and in the secrets of every heart. It is

because of what he, as omniscient, sees in men, that he weeps as Mediator for and with them. He penetrates into the dark places of the city. He ranges through the wretched streets, and hears the jubilee of the wicked ones in their midnight orgies. He looks within the low, dark, cold dwellings, where men and women may lie on the floor by night, but can hardly stand erect by day. He sees the unnatural parents who starve their little ones, that they may feed their own lusts. He sees the thoughtless youth who deserts in poverty the mother who bore him. He sees the fiery appetites of the intemperate, and the enticements spread out to allure the victim into the net. The confused hum of a noisy and noisome pauperism is articulate in his ear, and he traces the threads of the tangled web to their source and cause.

Lifting his eyes from this quarter of the city and fixing them upon another, he beholds a gay fluttering throng pressing forward, and trampling on each other, chasing a phantom that continually recedes and baffles them. The very eye-balls of the chasers seem ready to start in the eagerness of the race; and while they all follow pleasure, pain is stamped on every brow. "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." And again, as he looks on the city, he weeps.

But are there not many companies in this city who are called by his name, and make their appeal to his Word? Surely he will be well pleased when his eye rests on these. True, wherever he sees a faithful witness, and a humble disciple, with that man he will

dwell. From the high heaven he will descend, and make his abode with the man who accepts him as his Lord and Saviour. But wherever he sees profession without practice—wherever he sees a zeal for God that twines around uncharitableness to men—wherever he sees the new name wedded to the old nature,—he weeps over the unequal yoking.

Lord, is it I?—Lord, is it I? Oh! if every man were not only zealous for public faithfulness, but jealous over himself with a godly jealousy!—if every man should so receive an indwelling Christ, that wrath and malice and evil-speaking should be driven away at his presence, the Lord would look down on our beautiful city as his garden, and enter it to taste his pleasant fruit. He would wipe his tears away, and rejoice over us with singing.

"In this thy day." *Thy day!* If when the sun sets in the west we were not sure whether he would rise on the morrow, oh what an evening it would be! ONE DAY! "*Thy day*"! How precious! But if the day is allowed to pass, and the work of the day not done, how terrible the sunset! Jerusalem had her day; the day was passing,—it was past. Jerusalem did not know her day, and did not notice that it had passed. Jerusalem, with her day done, was laughing: Jesus, looking on lost Jerusalem, wept.

This is not of private interpretation,—it is written for our sakes. Our city has a day; ourselves have a day. Throughout this day it is peace—your peace—pressing

like the air around us. The night cometh, when that light of life is gone. Men mistake the meaning of Emmanuel's tenderness. It is not tenderness to sin. Men are tender to their own sin, treating it as a spoiled child, —blaming it in words, but fondling it all the while; and they think that Christ will turn out such an one as themselves. His grief does not indicate a holding back, a hesitating to cast away the wicked. The earnestness with which the Redeemer strove to snatch the brand from the burning, shows that there is a burning for the brand. The tears he shed over Jerusalem do not prove that he will falter and hesitate to lay her even with the ground when her day is done: if he had thought that Jerusalem might escape in her sin, he would not have wept to see her sinning. No preachers are so terrible as the Redeemer's tears. People speak of some ministers as harsh because they say that the wicked shall be turned into hell. Ah! the sternest preacher is soft compared with this weeping of Christ. You despise the weakness that weeps over an unreal woe. Would you write this weeper down as a fool, making an ado where there is no danger? This same Jesus will not weep when he says to them on his left hand, "Depart from me;" but he weeps to-day over those who neglect his salvation, if so be that by this last and strongest drawing he might draw the lost from the pit.

The lesson that presents itself at the close, is the lesson that springs out of almost every text,—the lesson,

as fresh and precious now as when it was first articulated by the tongues of men,—the lesson that Jesus, who bought redemption with his own blood, who has redemption plenteous treasured in the eternal covenant—pardon, instant and free and complete for ever—that he, the Author and Possessor and Giver of eternal redemption to the lost, rejoices when they accept his gift, and weeps over them when they neglect it!

XXIV.

The Three Kings.

"*So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead. Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.*"—2 CHRONICLES xxxiii. 20–25.

IN this history, within the space of six verses three kings succeed each other by right of birth on the throne of Judah at Jerusalem. Through these three links the kingdom descends in a direct line from father to son,—from Manasseh to Amon, from Amon to Josiah. These three kings, though closely related in blood, were very diverse in spirit. Neither the good nor the evil was hereditary. Grace did not follow nature.

Much instruction may be obtained from the story of each taken by itself, and still more from the connected narrative of the three. In some places a single light

burning aloft on the shore is sufficient to direct the mariner as he approaches the harbour in darkness; but in some two lights are necessary, in others three, of different colours, and placed on different sides of the channel. These names, with the histories attached to them, are set in the Bible like beacon-lights burning on the shore. As we make way over life's dangerous sea, we should take our bearings by these marks, that we may steer clear of rocks where other wayfarers made shipwreck, and follow the track of those who safely reached their rest. At this point of our voyage three lights are set up; not all on the same side, and not all of the same colour, disposed so that no thoughtful voyager can miss their meaning. The characters are widely different, and the instruction which their histories contain is on that account all the more precious. Lights all of one colour, and shining all in one row, would not have much meaning. The white light of safety, the green light of caution, and the red light of danger are all equally useful, equally necessary, each in its own place. Thus, the early wickedness and late repentance of Manasseh, the grandfather,—the reckless life and violent death of Amon, the father,—and the childhood piety and lengthened usefulness of Josiah, the son, are a chain of lights set up on the line of our life-path to warn us away from the rocks and quicksands,—to guide us to the haven.

Let us now consider the history of these three kings, with a view to the practical lessons which it is fitted to teach.

I. *Manasseh.*—Although he was the son of the best of David's descendants, he was himself for a long time one of the worst. Hezekiah was a pattern of godliness in his day. Manasseh, his son and successor, was a profane and cruel idolater. He built altars to the sun and the moon within the precincts of the temple of God at Jerusalem. He made his own children pass through the fire in honour of his idols. He sinned with a high hand himself, and led his subjects in his own steps. Instead of being an example to others, Jerusalem, in his days, was more wicked than the surrounding heathen.

In the course of time, this bad king fell into deep affliction. The king of Assyria sent an army against him. Manasseh was not a coward: he hastily collected a body of soldiers, and marched to meet the enemy. The battle was decided against him by what is commonly called an accident. In some turn of the conflict, the king of Judah and his men were obliged to march through a field overgrown with thorns. The soldiers were entangled, and could neither go backward nor forward. While they were in this position, the Assyrians attacked them and gained the victory. Manasseh himself was taken prisoner, and carried in chains to Babylon.

He thought, no doubt, and said, that if the thorns had not happened to be so rank on that field, he would have gained the battle. The conquered king would lay the blame on the thorns; but it was God who used both the thorns and the Assyrian army as his instruments to bring affliction on Manasseh for his good. His trouble was

blessed. "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers." The hard heart of this chief sinner was broken. He grieved over his own sin; he sought mercy from God in the appointed way,—he sought and found. For that blessed law, "Seek, and ye shall find," was in operation long before it was announced in these terms by the Lord Jesus. God heard that sinner's prayer, and pardoned him. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, received that sinner long ago, before there were any Pharisees to upbraid him for the fact. After this change the king lived and reigned a while. Then he was a good king, because he was a new creature. He could reign well over men, after he had submitted himself unto God.

The history is recorded in the earlier portion of the chapter. It is a grand example of a high-handed sinner finding mercy late in life, and spared a while to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. This example stands in the Old Testament as the penitent thief on Calvary stands in the New,—a monument of God's wonderful mercy, and a sign that the chief of sinners need not despair.

The latter portion of Manasseh's life was devoted to the service of God and the well-being of his country. When the tree was made good, it bore good fruit: when his heart was made new, his life became holy. His conversion was true the moment that he turned; and if he had been called away then, he would have been called to rest. But the sparing mercy that left him a while in the

world after he was renewed was a great privilege to himself and an unspeakable encouragement to those who follow.

II. "*Amon his son reigned in his stead.*"—This poor monarch's life and reign occupy only four verses of the history. The story is very short, but very clear: the words are few, but the meaning is great. When he ascended the throne at his father's death he was twenty-two years of age. His conduct was bad, his reign short, and his death violent.

Having seen both sides of his father's character, he rejected the good part, and imitated the evil. He served the idols which Manasseh had made in the days of his sin, and sought not that gracious God whom Manasseh had found in the day of his repentance. "He humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more."

Such was his life; and from our own experience we may discover, without much risk of mistake, what were the secret workings of heart which issued in such a course of conduct. The young man could not have been an unconcerned spectator of the change that had passed upon the character of his father. He saw the repentance that came in the time of trouble, and the reformation that followed repentance. Perhaps he thought his father had acted rightly at last, and determined, when he should grow old, to follow his father's example. He might silently reason within himself, "My father enjoyed the world to the full while he was young, and turned over a new leaf

when he was growing old: in this way he made the most of it. He enjoyed the pleasures of sin while he was able to enjoy them, and yet made himself safe at last, by repenting before he died." Amon, having in his breast a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, may have secretly resolved to do as his father had done,—to live in sin as long as he could enjoy it, and then by a sudden repentance secure his safety before he should be called away.

It is likely that he would not have repented although his life had been prolonged to fourscore,—it is likely that he would have grown more and more hardened till the last; but the opportunity of repenting in old age was not given to him. "His servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house." Ah, what horrors lie hid under the folds of that short sentence! At the age of twenty-four, with a heart abandoned to evil, and the resources of a kingdom at his command, Amon was drinking the cup of pleasure without restraint, putting off the thought of repentance till he should grow old. As those who live for their own pleasure are generally unkind to their inferiors, it is probable that Amon was hated by his attendants. These attendants, unable longer to endure their master, watched their opportunity, rushed upon him within his own palace, probably when he was asleep, and murdered him in a moment. King Amon lay down wearied with one day's sin, in order that he might get his strength restored for another. He lay down to sleep in Time, and awoke from that sleep in Eternity! Ah, who shall con-

ceive the man's amazement, when he lifted up his eyes, and saw the great white throne! It is well that our eye cannot follow the guilty to the judgment-seat of God. The sight would be too dreadful: it would overwhelm us. A veil has in mercy been thrown over the scene. God keeps its secrets to himself. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

III. "*The people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.*"—The murderers were punished with death, and the son of the slaughtered king, though an infant, was peaceably seated on his father's throne. Josiah was a child of eight years old when he was acknowledged king. Whether he became king immediately after the death of his father, or a few years afterwards, we do not know. Either in the eighth year of his life, when he was crowned, or in the sixteenth year of his life, when he had reigned eight years, he began to seek after the God of David his father. Four years after his first decided personal dedication to the service of God, he took courage to begin a thorough reformation of his kingdom. Both in the capital and throughout the country he destroyed all the machinery of idolatry, and established again the worship of the true God. His religion began early, and continued to the last. His reign of thirty-one years was a time of spiritual refreshing in Judah, and his memory is fragrant even to this day. For more than two thousand years Josiah's name has been a household word among all who fear God, as an example of youthful piety

in the high places of the earth. It is not a little remarkable that among the sovereigns of England, who personally administered the kingdom, the youngest was the best. The memory of Edward VI., the boy king, stands high above all the rest for a savour of godliness. It is difficult to reach and maintain a character of true piety in the highest ranks of society, but not more difficult than in the lowest. Here and there one has appeared on either extreme,—evidence that all things are possible with God. Well may we pray, "Give me neither poverty nor riches;" but when either is given, we need not be afraid. "My grace is sufficient for thee."

When a train is running along the rails in the dark, the driver keeps a sharp look-out forward. If he see a green light, he slows, and creeps cautiously forward, ready at any moment to stop; if he see a red light, he pulls up at once, and either goes back or stands still until the danger is removed: it is when a bright white light is held out that he goes confidently, quickly forward on his journey.

The case of Manasseh, held aloft before our eyes in the Bible, is like the green light, and means "Beware." He who passed this way nearly perished. He was saved so as by fire. In this path of late repentance one here and there succeeds in clearing the pitfall, but the greater number perish. The case of Amon is like the red light, and calls for instant turning. He who tried to pass this way perished miserably. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" The case of Josiah, following the Lord fully from

childhood to age, is like the white light of safety beaming on the path. Forward fearlessly in that line; the path is pleasant, and the issue safe.

Take now, one by one, the chief lessons that lie in the life of these three kings; four separate lessons, one on each of the three separately, and one on all combined.

1. From the experience of Manasseh, *there is no limit to the mercy of God.* No mountains of transgression rise so high that this flood cannot cover them. Sinners the chief are welcome to pardon immediate and complete. Although the prodigal has wasted all in riotous living, let him but arise and go to his Father, and he will be received without upbraiding. This blessed truth, which has existed from the beginning, has in gospel times been more fully made known. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." The same blood of the Lamb which is necessary to wash away an infant's sin, is sufficient to free the hoariest sinner on earth from every spot and wrinkle. No human being, of whatever age or character, has cause to hesitate and hold back, when he is inclined to repent, from any fear of being unwelcome. If windows were open in Scripture only where we might see such men as Samuel and Daniel and John, standing before the throne in white clothing, we would be cast down—down even to despair. We would not dare to hope that such as we are could be admitted to the society of saints. If we saw only great saints getting in, we who are great sinners would lose heart. But when we see Manasseh, and men like him, going in and made

welcome, there is hope for us. If we follow their steps in repentance, we shall be permitted to join their company in rest.

A sad lesson seems to lie here under the shade of the more cheering one. It is this: The son of Manasseh fell in with his father's wickedness, but could not turn with his father when he turned to the Lord. Oh, beware of giving an evil example to the young! for even though you should repent and turn to the Lord, you may not be able to lead those with you in your repentance who followed you in your sin.

2. From Amon's case learn that a deceitful heart turns even the grace of God into a snare. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." If, by observing that an old sinner is forgiven when he repents, you are encouraged to refuse repentance in your youth, you lose your own soul, and your blood will be upon your own head. As Manasseh's case is recorded in the Bible that an aged sinner desiring to return may not be cast into despair, Amon's case is recorded beside it that the young may be warned not to delay an hour lest they perish in their sins. Here the lesson is written as if with the blood of that murdered youth: "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." If the young refuse to come to Christ now, because they have heard that people may be converted after they are old, they may be cut off unforgiven, without a warning note, without a moment's respite.

But further, the conception which is the groundwork of that delay is false from the root. It is the conception that to come near to God, and be reconciled through the blood of the Lamb, and to walk with God in spirit here, before we go to see him as he is—the conception that all this is a dreary penance to be endured, and therefore to be avoided as long as possible. Thus it is that the carnal mind is enmity against God. The whole life of the carnal gives the lie to God's gracious word.

3. Josiah chose the best part. He took his side in childhood, and was supported all his days in the arms of the mighty God of Jacob. I think we never fully recognize the advantage of taking the Lord's side in youth. We are so much occupied with that other truth, very precious and very pressing—that the oldest and the hardest may come—that we are apt to overlook the blessedness of coming early. Some of the advantage is obtained in time, but more will emerge in eternity. The birth-pains are comparatively easy in youth. True it is—and God be praised for the truth—a man *can* be born when he is old; but this implies many rendings, and it leaves many scars. The child-disciples escape many memories that torment those who have given their early life to sin. I cannot but think that even heaven is happier to those who have never known the depths of Satan.

4. Neither grace nor gracelessness goes by blood. We will not be saved by our parents' goodness, and we cannot be cast away because of their badness. Every one must give an account of himself to God. There are, in-

deed, advantages and disadvantages, greater than we can measure, in the education and example afforded to children at home; but this, though an influential, is not the decisive point. They who enjoy the greatest home privilege may abuse it; and they who enjoy no such privilege may yet walk with God while they live, and go to be with him when they die. These two cognate lessons are plainly contained in this history: First, a converted father cannot secure the safety of an unconverted son; and, second, an unconverted father cannot drag down a child in his fall, if that child has for himself taken the Lord for his God. The one lesson is fitted to make the presumptuous humble, the other to give the desponding hope. Each one stands by himself. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and *thou* shalt be saved."

The shadow of these spiritual things is cast clearly upon the face of nature. A tree once wild and barren has been grafted at length, and is now a good tree, bearing good fruit. This is Manasseh. From the seed of that tree a young tree springs; but it grows up wild and barren: if it is not ingrafted too, it will be hewn down and cast into the fire. This is Amon. Once more: although that second tree remained evil and was cut down, a tree springs from its seed; and that tree, grafted when young, becomes a good tree. This is Josiah.

There remains yet the further lesson, spread over all the three examples—that striking providences and afflictions are effective instruments in God's hand for conver-

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sion. It is not that these strokes generate the new life: it is the seed of the Word, buried in a broken heart, out of which the new life springs; but the strokes of God's hand are used to break up the way for the entrance of the Word, and to bruise a bed for it where all was stone before.

The affliction that came upon Manasseh became the means of the change in his heart. Had he not been taken in the thorns and carried away as a captive, he would not have turned to the Lord. For ever and for ever will Manasseh, as a saint in rest, weave these thorns into a psalm of praise. Thorns of more species than one will go into the songs of the upper sanctuary. Thorns in the field, that prevented the soldiers from using their weapons, and thorns in the flesh, that acted as Satan's messengers to buffet God's saints, will both be acknowledged as instruments used by the Sovereign Spirit in preparing a people for the Lord. Let us endeavour to be patient when thorns prick us: they are the hedges which God has planted to keep us in the way of life; they will become a wreath of victory in the great day. "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed."